THE MAN ON HORSEBACK

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BY

ACHMED ABDULLAH
Author of "The Trail of The Beast"

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To
Gene Wick and J. B. Hawley
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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

The Man on Horseback

CHAPTER I

THE YANKEE DOODLE GLORY

LIKE a great, shimmering silver horn the morning mist swung out of the valley and Tom Graves swung along with it, sitting his tough, sinewy, thirteen-hand pony as easily as a lifetime of it can teach a man, and lifting the mare gently with knee and soft word and knowing hand when ruts or slippery timber falls cleft the road or when it dipped too suddenly into rock-strewn levels.

Fourteen miles beyond, an hour and a half's ride if the pony was as keen as the man, was Woodfell, a one-horse, one-man homestead of drab, slat-built house, splintering, zig-zag fence, rickety corral, and a brown, hopeless blotch of illy tilled fields. There he would stable his horse with "Swede" Johnson, the squatter, pay more or less gracefully that flaxen-haired individual's habitual overcharge for a meal consisting of bread mixed in the flour bag and baked in the frying-pan, inky, boiled coffee, stringy bacon that tasted of fish, and rice pudding remarkable for its shortcomings as to raisins, and resume his journey on foot into the Hoodoo mining district.

Tom Graves was easily moved to laughter. He

would laugh, at other people and at himself, with his mouth that was wide and generous, his flashing, even, white teeth, his square fighter's chin, his nose that, starting in a haughty Wellingtonian curve, finished disconcertingly with a humorous tilt to starboard. He would laugh with every inch of his muscular, well-knit body, with his very hair that was uncompromisingly bristly and as uncompromisingly red; and he laughed now as he said to himself that the district was rightly named.

The Hoodoo! The evil, lumpish spirit of man's aspirations, man's hopes and faith!

Once that part of Idaho had been famed for its rich placer claims that had washed every day into the thousands; then a misleading and glittering outcropping of gold-studded quartz, and a mad wave of adventurers, Americans, Canadians, Englishmen, Scots, and Scandinavians, surging in and making the gaunt hillsides ring with the staccato thud of pickaxe and the dull, minatory rumble of powder and dynamite. Finally disappointment, misgivings, an indiscriminate swallowing of both capital and labor in one tremendous avalanche of failure . . . And the merry band of Argonauts, shaking off their dismay as a spaniel shakes off water and cocking their beavers at the face of misfortune, had followed the gold lure into farther fields, the Kootenais this time.

To-day the Hoodoo district was empty of life except for a couple of ancient Chinamen from California, satisfied with washing their daily dole of five dollars of gold in a forgotten claim; a few optimistic Spokane prospectors who dreamt glimmering mirages of mica; and John Truex, called "Old Man" Truex throughout the Inland Empire.

He was a relic of former days, a man who had once

hobnobbed with such notorious characters of local Northwestern history as Soapy Smith and Swiftwater Bill and who, well past three score and ten, white-haired, patriarchal, yet erect and lithe, had built himself a two-story cabin of logs neatly dovetailed, in the heart of the bleak, frowning Hoodoos. It was surrounded by a flower garden, odorous with old-fashioned blossoms, and flanked by a nostalgic strawberry patch, shooting thin roots in fifteen inches of well-fertilized soil that he had carried in bags from the rolling Palouse and spread with loving hands on the narrow rock ledge that framed his cabin.

He still called himself a prospector, still was sure that some day he would strike it rich, and he was the partner of Tom Graves, half owner in the latter's prospect hole that was called grandiloquently the Yankee Doodle Glory and was the joke of every mining man from Seattle to the Idaho Panhandle.

Not that Tom Graves was a miner by profession.

He had been born thirty years earlier in the Palouse, had never been west of Spokane nor east of Butte, and had followed the range all his life. As a boy he had helped his father in a decade's hopeless fight against the sprouting of grain, the fencing of free land, and the nibbling of sharp-toothed sheep, afterwards riding herd to various cattle men, and finally becoming horse wrangler to Charles Nairn, the owner and manager of the Killicott ranch.

He was a typical Man on Horseback, an atavistic throwback to an earlier age when men rode free and large, and before steam and electricity and machinery came to cumber, some say to lighten, the world's burden. But he was not displeased when his friends referred to him as "the miner," or introduced him to traveling salesmen or visiting ranchers as the "King

of the Hoodoos." For he had a healthy American appetite after money and the decent things that money can buy.

He remembered how the Yankee Doodle Glory had come into his possession at the end of a memorable day and night two-handed, stud-poker session with Dixon Harris, the horse wrangler of a neighboring ranch.

Tom had won steadily, hand after hand, pot after pot, until finally Dixon Harris had risen to his feet, had taken a greasy, yellowish, thumb-stained paper from his pocket, and thrown it across the table.

"I am flat, Tom," he had announced. "Thirty seeds to the bow-wows an' next pay day a hell o' a long ways off. Take this here Yankee Doodle Glory an' call it even. Somebody stuck me with it when I wasn't lookin' an' now I'm goin' to stick you, you old son-of-a-gun. Turn about's fair play!"

And Tom Graves had laughed and had taken the title certificate—the mine was patented—in payment of Dixon Harris' gambling debt.

The Yankee Doodle Glory was a standing joke in the community. It had had a variegated, picturesque, and not altogether honest career. It had been sold and re-sold to capitalists from Boston, London, Minneapolis, and New York, abandoned and picked up again, disposed of at auction in Spokane amidst the roaring laughter of those present for thirty-five cents cash ("an' you're paying damned high for what you're getting!" the auctioneer had added facetiously); money had been spent on it lavishly for blasting and timbering, tunneling and assaying, and never a speck of color, neither gold nor silver, neither copper nor galena, had ever been discovered in its frowning, hopeless depths.

Men out there in the Northwest spoke of "passing

the Yankee Doodle Glory" as men in other places speak of "passing the buck"; and now laughing Tom Graves was the owner.

But though he had had half-a-dozen chances of palming it off on newcomers fresh from the East he had always stoutly refused to do so.

"It isn't because I don't want to stick 'em," he had said, blushing like a girl, "but I'm going to develop this here property of mine, see?" And so he had formed a partnership with "Old Man" Truex by the terms of which the latter contributed the labor, the tools, and the dynamite, while Tom ceded to him a half interest in the mine and gave an occasional sum of money whenever he could save it out of his munificent wage of sixty dollars a month.

And then, two days ago, he had received a succinct and ungrammatical telegram that read:

> "Git here in a helluva hurry struck it apowerful and aplenty.
>
> "(Signed) TRUEX."

CHAPTER II

GOLD

"Look a-here, Tom," said "Old Man" Truex late that evening as he was busying himself amongst his pots and pans that shone and twinkled and glittered like so many kindly, ruby-eyed hobgoblins, "what are you goin' t'do with your half of all them opprobrious riches down yonder in the Yankee Doodle Glory?" He waved a hand through the window towards the Hoodoos that coiled back to the star-lit firmament in a great wave of carved, black stone.

Tom was toasting his legs in front of the glowing hearth. He was tired and sleepy and happy. All morning he had ridden; then the long up-hill pull on foot from "Swede" Johnson's homestead to the cabin; and finally three hours' climbing and slipping in and about the prospect hole of the Yankee Doodle Glory under his partner's guidance. It had not meant much to him: just a flat facet of shimmering quartz where the old miner's pickaxe had uncovered it, something like a trail of haggard, indifferent light that disappeared in the frowning maw of a rudely blasted, rudely timbered tunnel, and a small heap of what to him had appeared to be rubbish, but which his partner had handled as a fond mother handles her first-born and had designated as: "Gold, my lad! Virgin gold, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Sure it isn't fool's gold?" Tom asked now with a laugh.

"Fool yourself!" In his excitement Truex missed the flapjack that he was tossing browned side up into the skillet, so that it dropped on the ground with a flopping, sizzling smack. "I tell you it's the real thing. Look a-here, Tom. I guess them years on the range have stunted yer perceptions. Of course you don't know the hills as I do. You can't know—oh—the struggle, the fight, the treachery, the damned cheating deceit that's in them rocks. But," wagging his patriarchal beard, "nor can you know the promise of them hills. Wealth that comes to you suddenly after you've given up hope and are mighty near to blowing off yer head with a stick o' powder! Why, by the Immortal and Solemnly Attested Heck!"—this was his pet swear word—"I tell you I have ranged these here hills since I was knee-high to a wood louse and I've never seen such a vein of—"

"Say! What is a vein?"

"Gosh A'mighty! Go to bed, Tom, before I brain you with my skillet. Only take this bit o' information along and hug it in yer dreams: You've got enough gold down there in the Yankee Doodle Glory to buy yourself what you want!"

"Oh!" Tom Graves yawned and kicked off his high-heeled boots. "I always did have a hankering after the coin. There's that new saddle Dixon Harris got up from Gallup's. Cost him seventy seeds and he's willing to part with it for fifty, spot cash. Guess there's enough gold in my half for that?"

Truex shook his head hopelessly.

"Tom," he said very solemnly, "I tell you there's enough gold in there so's you can do what you darned please. You can go to Spokane and join the Club and be a man o' leisure. You can walk up Seventh Avenue and have the pick of all them swell dumps

there. You can surround yer bow-legged self with Chink cooks and autermobiles and baskets of champagne and . . . Say, what d'you call them things full o' small bones that tastes like punk chicken and sticks in yer throat?"

"Fishes?" suggested Tom sleepily.

"No! Not fishes! I had it once when I sold that there Sally Miller prospect hole to that Eastern guy. Wait! I have it! Terrapin—that's the name! Why, man," he continued seriously, sitting down on the edge of his narrow bunk and scratching his shins, "there's so much gold down there in that hole it makes me afraid at times. Afraid!" he repeated in a strangely sibilant whisper.

"Say, you're locoed!" Tom laughed. "What's the matter with you, old-timer? Afraid of gold?"

"I ain't afraid of the gold. Gold is all right." Truex shook his head. "But, Tom . . ." he crossed the room and put his hand on the younger man's shoulder, "when you were down there, in that tunnel of the Yankee Doodle Glory, didn't you—oh—hear something?"

Tom looked up sharply.

"I did. But it wasn't exactly hearing. It was more like . . ." he hunted for the right word. "Well, something like . . . I don't know what!"

"All right. You did notice it then!" Truex broke in triumphantly. "And so did I!"

"Isn't it always so in a mine? In a tunnel? Like an echo?"

"No. It isn't. And it wasn't like an echo. Nor did I notice it until my pickaxe knocked off that bit o' sure-enough quartz, the morning I sent you that wire! Say, Tom," he went on, very earnestly, "it's maybe because I am an old fellow and sorta supersti-

tious. I've followed the gold trail these fifty years or more, an' I know! I have seen mighty strange things in the hills. I could tell—things. And, Tom, down there in the Yankee Doodle Glory, when I found that bit o' quartz with the true color sticking in it like raisins in a pudding, I had a funny feeling. I . . . I was scared, scared stiff. Well, never mind," he wound up, returning to his bunk and taking off his clothes. "To-morrow you got to get up right early and take a sample of that there ore to Newson Garrett in Spokane. He'll make us an assay. Good night."

"Good night," mumbled Tom, who was already half asleep.

CHAPTER III

THE UNKNOWN METAL

A LONG career as chemist and assayer had made a pessimist and misanthrope of Newson Garrett.

Miners had come to his laboratory and had offered him large, certified checks, asking nothing of him in return except that he should rectify his reports by taking off a couple of figures from the rubric entitled Silica and add them to that labeled Gold. Other miners had proposed to kill him on the spot when he told them that what they had taken for virgin gold were only shimmering, deceptive bits of iron crystal. Still others, told by him that they had struck it rich, went straightway on a lengthy spree in the old Cœur d'Alene Theater to wake up a week later with a splitting headache and a brown taste, and to discover on returning to their mines that somebody had jumped their claims in the meantime.

So he was morose and silent.

"It'll take another Treadwell, another Leroy, to make me excited," he used to say at the Club over his glass of Vichy and milk, "and those days are over. Why, to-day a fellow thinks he's all the Guggenheims rolled into one and multiplied by the sum total of all the Vanderbilts when his stuff runs two ounces to the ton!"

But, five days later, when Tom Graves ambled into his office, still dressed as if he had just come fresh

from the range, in blue jeans tucked into high-heeled boots, a gray flannel shirt, and sombrero, but all neat and clean, even slightly dandyish in the careful knotting of the blue cotton necktie, the rakish angle of his hat, and the elaborate pattern stitched on his boot legs, Newson Garrett smiled. He smiled all over his large, puttyish, hairless face, and held out a flabby hand.

"Mr. Graves," he said in his exact, well-modulated diction that still smacked of Harvard after a lifetime in the Northwest, "permit me to shake you by the hand."

"Sure, I'll permit it if you ask like a nice little girl. But, what's the festive occasion? Why this exuberance of comehitherness, Garrett?"

"Your mine!" replied the other. "Your Yankee Doodle Glory! The jest of the decade has turned into the marvel, the envy of the decade, my dear sir. It is wonderful. I might say extraordinary. It will make history in the mining annals of the Inland Empire. See for yourself," handing Tom the typewritten assay report of the quartz samples which Truex had given him.

Tom read:

"Au. .....115 oz.
Ag. .....1.5 oz.
Cu. .....tr.
Fe. 12.2%
SiO_2 .....45%
Al_2O_3 CaO, MgO, etc., not determined.

There is also present an element, probably some metal that could not be determined, as it did not respond to ordinary tests."

Tom looked up with a laugh.

"Say, put it in plain American. All this is Siwash to me. What does it mean?"

"It means that you are rich beyond the dreams of avarice. It means that you are a budding Rockefeller. It means that the Yankee Doodle Glory, if the vein runs true . . ."

"Truex says it does . . ."

"He ought to know. He is an expert at blocking out ore bodies in his own crude way."

"I guess so." Tom pointed at the paragraph at the bottom of the assay report. "Say, Garrett, what's this?"

"Just what it says there. You see, when I assayed the ore samples, though I used all the known tests, there was one little ingredient, a metal most likely—I am trying not to be too technical—that I was unable to separate."

Tom leaned across the counter. He thought of his partner's curious words, and of his own curious sensation, something like an echo, yet less decided, more far away, he had experienced when he had entered the tunnel of the Yankee Doodle Glory and had come face to face with the ore ledge which his partner's pickaxe had uncovered.

"This unknown metal or whatever you call it," he asked, "did it—well—affect you any? Your ears, I mean . . . ?"

"Yes!" Garrett gave his words the emphasis of a suddenly lowered voice. "It did affect my ears in a very strange," he thumped the table in an access of quite unhabitual excitement, "a perfectly unscientific manner." He was going to say more, but checked himself. "Never mind," he went on, "you are rich. You've got the gold. As to this unknown ingredient, this unknown metal, I have made sure that it will not interfere with any smelting process you may decide on. And I shall send it East to a friend of mine who

has a great scientific laboratory to see what he makes of it. Don't you worry about it."

But Tom Graves did worry a day later when Truex suddenly came to town and went straight to his room in the Hotel Spokane.

"Tom," said the old miner, "I'm through with the Yankee Doodle Glory. I'd swap my half of it for a chaw of Macdonald's plug." And being pressed for a reason he repeated his former statement that he was afraid. He said that, in continuing blasting the tunnel and running it smack up against the vein, he had uncovered an even richer ore body, but that the strange sensations, as of a far-off echo, had increased a hundredfold.

"Garrett says something about a new metal," rejoined Tom Graves.

"Forget it. Metals don't affect your ears. I don't want nothing to do with that there mine."

"But," said Tom philosophically, "half of it is yours."

"I don't want nothing to do with it, just the same. I'm scared. I don't want to ever enter that tunnel again!"

"You won't have to. We'll develop the mine in style. It won't cost much, will it?"

"No. We got enough ore in sight to pay for all the machinery we need, an' I've a little money saved up. But," he repeated, irritably, "I tell you, Tom, I'm goin' to sidestep that there mine. I don't want nothing to do with it—not a damned thing. I'd rather . . ."

"All right, all right, old-timer. Keep your hair on. I'll take a run over to the Club and have a talk with Martin Wedekind."

The latter was a German-American of the best type.

He came of an excellent Berlin family, but his father, dead these many years, had been of such a grimly Calvinistic turn of mind that he had not been able to understand why his own children should have been born with a grain of original sin. To the father, the whole of life had meant nothing but a continuous and emphatic moral action. He had brought up his two sons accordingly, and had strained their souls to such a horrible pitch of self-righteousness and hard idealism that they threatened to snap and recoil.

And finally, in the case of Martin, his younger son, it had recoiled. He had been guilty of a small sin and had been shipped off to America thirty years earlier.

He had come straight West, had done well there, and had become an American heart, soul, and politics, including even the saving prejudices. He hated the very sound of the word hyphen.

"There are two classes of hyphenates," he used to say when he warmed to the subject. "There's the sort who get here via the steerage with the clothes they stand in, make their stake, thanks to the splendid hospitality, the fairness of equal chance, and the unlimited possibilities of America, and return to Germany as first-class passengers with money jingling in their jeans. Over yonder they pose as Simon-pure Yankees and read the *New York Herald,* while here in America they swear by Bill the Kaiser and read the *New Yorker Herold.* They are the breed who hate America and dislike Germany, who try to straddle the fence, who would kick at the climate of both Hell and Paradise, who are neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring. Then there's the other variety, the intellectual hyphenates—and often they have good American names and not a drop of German blood in their

veins—who spout statistics about German efficiency, meaning by that damnable word a comparison between what's best in Germany with what's worst in America. I hate both breeds. I'm an American. No. I am not sorry that I wasn't born over here. If I had been, I wouldn't have been able to appreciate so thoroughly what America is, and means, and does."

To-day Martin Wedekind was retired from active business affairs and spent his time between his home in Lincoln Addition and the Club, where he played his afternoon game of cards or dominoes and took his whiskey straight, like a native born. His wife was a New England woman and he had an only child, a daughter. He was a little on the autumn side of fifty, tall, heavy, slightly stooped, with peering, twinkling, kindly eyes, a mass of close-curled hair, a thick, graying mustache, and great hairy hands that he used freely to gesticulate with.

He did so this afternoon when the Club steward announced Tom Graves, whom he had met the year before on a visit to the owner of the Killicott ranch. At that time an impromptu friendship had sprung up between the two men in spite of their difference in age and fortune and, at least on Tom's side, not altogether hindered by the fact that Bertha, Martin Wedekind's daughter, was blond and violet-eyed and straight of limb.

"Hullo, Tom! Hullo, capitalist!" was his hearty greeting as the young Westerner ambled into the room with that peculiar, straddling, side-wheeling walk which smacked of stock saddle and rolling prairie.

Tom grinned sheepishly as he sat down. "I guess the news of the rich strike in the Yankee Doodle Glory is all over town by this time?" he asked.

"Sure. Garrett spilled the beans."

"Damned good beans," commented Tom, "fine and rich and nutritious and juicy."

"Yes. But look out, young fellow. Every con agent in the Inland Empire is going to lay for you with a flannel-wrapped brick and a cold deck."

Tom waved a careless hand.

"A fat lot of good it'll do them," he laughed. "My mother was Scotch and as careful as a setting hen, and I've followed the range all my life. Bulliest little training-school to kick some horse sense into you. Well, Wedekind," he leaned across the table and his eyes lit up with a frank, boyish appeal, "you're a good friend of mine, aren't you?"

"None better!" came the kindly reply.

"Fine and dandy. You see, I want to talk to you about that mine."

Wedekind smiled.

"Need a stake to start your developing work?" he asked, slapping his check book on the table. "Name your figure, my boy."

Tom shook his head. "Thanks. It isn't that. It's just some advice I want about my partner. The old son-of-a-gun has gone loco . . ."

"Gold gone to his head?"

"Not a bit. Gold's gone to his feet. They're cold, Wedekind, as cold as clay." And he told the other about the curious sensation, as of a far-off echo, he and his partner had experienced in the tunnel, adding that Truex resolutely refused to have anything more to do with the Yankee Doodle Glory, and showing Garrett's assay report with the paragraph about the unknown substance on the bottom.

"Garrett says it's all right?" asked Wedekind.

"Sure. As right as rain. Says that foreign metal

or whatever it may turn out to be won't interfere with the smelting."

"Well, there's nothing to worry over then. I guess platinum was an unknown metal once, and even gold and silver were unknown during the iron age."

"But Truex won't play."

"You don't need him, Tom. You work the mine yourself. I'll give you a line to Fred Gamble, the engineer. He has done some work for me. And you make a contract with Truex . . . Never mind. I'll take the matter up with him myself." He looked at his watch. "What are you doing to-night?"

"Oh, nothing special."

"Fine. Come on up to the house and take pot luck. Mrs. Wedekind will be glad to see you. And Bertha, too."

"I haven't seen your daughter since last year," said Tom, as he walked down the broad staircase of the Club side by side with Wedekind.

The latter laughed.

"She's changed some," he replied. "You know she has been visiting my brother Heinrich in Berlin for over five months. Just returned. Oh, yes," he repeated rather musingly, "she's changed some."

CHAPTER IV

BERTHA WEDEKIND

"Well, Tom, I am glad to see you!" Mrs. Wedekind, small, delicate, white-haired, with something about her reminiscent of old lace and lavender, beamed upon him through her gold-rimmed spectacles. "And rich, aren't you?"

Tom Graves felt slightly embarrassed. References to the lucky strike in the Yankee Doodle Glory and his suddenly acquired wealth often made him curiously ill at ease as if it were a reflection, quite undeserved, on his character and his manliness.

So he smiled vaguely and apologetically and shook her hand without knowing what to reply, while Martin Wedekind, guessing what was going on in the young Westerner's mind, came to the rescue.

"Yes, Fanny," he said to his wife. "Who would have believed last year that the Killicott ranch harbored a prospective capitalist?" He turned to Tom and led him to the sideboard with its hospitable array of bottles and glasses and syphons. "Shall I mix you one in honor of the occasion?"

But Tom Graves was not listening, for Bertha Wedekind had come into the dining-room, an exquisite little figure with her wheat-colored hair that rippled over the broad, smooth, low forehead in a curly, untamable mass, her violet-blue eyes, her pure oval of a face, pink and white and flower-soft. Her youth-

ful incompleteness seemed a lovely sketch for something larger, finer, more splendid; just a sketch of happy, seductive hints with the high-lights of womanhood yet missing.

Tom took her narrow, white hand, looking upon her admiringly and approvingly. She was dressed in foamy silver lace over shimmering rose-pink satin, with contrasting moire ribbons in deep purple and a cluster of purple satin orchids at her high waist line.

Tom laughed. He remembered how he had seen her the year before, on the Killicott ranch where she had been spending the summer together with her parents, in riding breeches, a khaki coat, a blue silk tie loosely knotted around her slim throat, and her hair pinned up carelessly beneath a flopping, mannish stetson, riding the range alongside of him and glorying in the speed and tang and zest of it.

"By Ginger, Bertha," he said, "you've sure changed some. Now that gown of yours," he was studying it naïvely, "I lay you my rock bottom dollar it's from Paris."

Bertha smiled rather languidly.

"I am afraid you would lose your bet, Tom," she replied. "This gown is not from Paris. I bought it in Berlin. Had it made there . . ." And, as if returning to a subject that was uppermost in her mind: "You don't have to go to Paris any more for gowns or, oh, 'most anything. You can get everything you want in Berlin. Not only frocks and frills, but beauty, and culture, and big things, worthwhile things! Why, compared to Germany, America is . . ."

"Daughter," cut in her mother dryly, "aren't you forgetting that you are an American?"

"Dad is a German. Aren't you, Dad?"

Martin Wedekind flushed an angry red. "I was

born in Berlin. But I am an American—every inch of me—all the time!"

"Uncle Heinrich told me in Berlin that . . ."

"Leave your Uncle Heinrich out of the question. He and I have gone different ways. I tell you that I am an American, while he is a Prussian officer. And—" turning to Tom and smiling bitterly, as if remembering something that had happened very long ago and that he had never been able to eradicate completely from his mind, "you know what Prussian officers are, don't you?"

Tom shook his head. His range of actual experience was limited by Spokane to the west, by Butte to the east, and the British Columbia border to the north. Of course he had known foreigners, but they were mostly Britons, Canadians, and Scandinavians, men very much like himself, men blending easily into the great, rolling West.

"I'll tell you what they are," continued Wedekind heatedly, "for I know them. They are brass-buttoned, brass-gallooned, brass-helmeted, brass-souled, saber-rattling vulgarians. They are . . ."

"Father! Please!" came Bertha's hurt, indignant cry, and at the same time, simultaneous with the Chinese servant's felt-slippered appearance, Mrs. Wedekind interrupted with a conciliatory:

"The soup's on the table!"

Martin Wedekind laughed.

"Never mind, little fellow," he said to his daughter, calling her by his favorite nickname, "you and I aren't going to quarrel over . . ."

"Over anything or anybody, Dad dear." Bertha finished the sentence for him, and gave his arm an affectionate little squeeze.

But even so there was a sort of embarrassed hush

during dinner now and again when the conversation turned to Berlin; and, somehow, it seemed impossible to keep away from the subject. Bertha was young and impressionable. She had just returned from Germany after her first visit abroad; and all she had seen there, and felt and heard, was very vivid in her memory, and very important.

Tom Graves looked at her rather ruefully. He was deeply in love with her, and he said to himself that she was different from the girl he used to know, different from the clear-eyed Western girl who had ridden by his side across the rolling range of the Killicott. Harder she seemed, more sure of herself, less considerate of other people's feelings, more stubborn and unreasonable in the swing of her own prejudices, more critical and skeptical; and after dinner, when Mrs. Wedekind had left the house to call on a neighbor while her husband was stealing a surreptitious forty winks behind the shelter of the evening paper, the change struck him more forcibly than ever.

Bertha was at the piano, her fingers softly sweeping the keys while she hummed a German song:

> "Klingling, tschingtsching und Paukenkrach,
> Noch aus der Ferne tönt es schwach,
> Ganz leise bumbumbumbum tsching,
> Zog da ein bunter Schmetterling,
> Tschingtsching, bum, um die Ecke?" . . .

Tom looked at her: at the tiny points of light that danced in her fair hair, the soft curve of her neck, the slim, straight young shoulders, and he took a deep breath, like a man about to jump. He was what his life had made him, the range, the free roaming, the open, vaulted sky. Simple he was and just a little stubborn; at times easily embarrassed, but of a lean veracity, with himself and other people, that

forced him to speak out sudden and unafraid where other, more sophisticated men, would have hesitated.

Thus it was now.

He had always loved her, and he had never considered the fact that he was a simple horse wrangler, while she was the daughter of a well-to-do, well-educated man. What had kept him from speaking to her of love had been the fact that he had been poor. Now he was on the road to fortune, and so he spoke, straight out, without preamble:

"Bertha, I must tell you something. I . . ."

She turned very quickly and cut through his sentence with a gesture of her slim, white fingers.

"Don't, Tom," she said.

"But you don't know what I . . ."

"I do. You are going to tell me that you love me, aren't you?" And, when he did not reply, just inclined his head, she went on: "I shall never marry an American!"

"You . . . What?" Tom was utterly taken aback.

"I shall never marry an American," she repeated calmly.

"But—why?"

She did not reply for several seconds. She had always liked Tom, had always felt safe in his presence. There had even been moments, last year on the Killicott ranch, when her liking had edged close to the danger line of something greater. But she had changed since then. In Berlin a new world, new people, a new view-point, new prejudices, had spread before her; and, honest in so far that she saw things without spectacles, dishonest in so far that these things were only those she wanted to see, she told Tom just what she thought.

"Love to me is a romantic thing, and you—I mean, American men—are so terribly, terribly prosy, so commonplace!"

Tom Graves was hurt. Not personally hurt, but hurt in his Americanism, his patriotism. It was a narrow patriotism, geographically limited, but it was clean and good and very decent.

"Bertha," he said, "pardon me—but you don't know what you're talking about!"

"Oh, don't I?"

"You don't. Romance? Is that what you are after?"

"Yes," she said stubbornly.

"All right. And aren't we Americans romantic enough for anybody who cares for that sort of thing? Why, girl, is there anything more romantic in the wide world than a typical American whose great-grandfather, rifle in arm and knife in boot, came out of Virginia into Kentucky in the days when Kentucky was the farthest frontier? Not for gain, but just to see what was going on behind the ranges? Whose grandfather drifted into Kansas when it was 'Bloody' Kansas and thence via Panama to California in the first great gold rush? Whose father mined and ranched and played poker and drank his red liquor from Alaska to the Sierras?"

"Meaning yourself?"

"You bet your life! I guess I've read some, back on the old homestead, in the long winter evenings in my father's tattered old books! I read a lot about your Brian Boru, and Richard the Lion-Hearted, and Tamerlane, and Frederick Barbarossa, and Roland, and all the other guys with their long, foreign, stem-winding names! But, say, for real, live, kicking ro-

mance, you give me a plain American, out of the Northwest, via Kentucky, Kansas, and California! Give me . . ."

"Teleglam, Missie!" came a soft, sing-song voice from the door, and Yat, the old Chinese servant, waddled in, giving a yellow envelope to Bertha.

She tore it open rapidly, read, and rushed over to her father.

"Dad! Dad!"

He sat up, rubbing his eyes. "Hello, little fellow! What's all the excitement?"

"Oh, Dad! Baron von Götz-Wrede is coming to America! He's going to come West, to Spokane!"

Martin Wedekind did not reply. Rather pityingly he looked at Tom Graves, who was moodily studying the pattern in the claret-colored Saruk rug.

But the German baron's cable was not the only one which was flashed over the Western wires that night. For when Tom returned to his room at the Hotel Spokane he found there a telegram, dated Berlin, offering him half a million dollars spot cash for control of the Yankee Doodle Glory.

It was signed: *"Johannes Hirschfeld & Co., G. M. B. H."*

CHAPTER V

THE OFFER

"WHAT do these hieroglyphics mean?" asked Tom of Martin Wedekind the next afternoon, pointing at the signature of the cablegram.

"*'G. M. B. H.?'*"

"Yes."

"It's an abbreviation for *'Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung.'*"

"Sounds like a he-clam singing through his nose," came Tom's observation. "What's the answer?"

"The English for it? 'Company with limited responsibility.' 'Johannes Hirschfeld & Co., Ltd.,' as the English would have it. By the way, some little offer that, Tom! Half a million cold cash . . . Whew!"

"I guess it's some sort of a con game."

"No!" Wedekind laughed. "In Germany the name of Johannes Hirschfeld stands for nickel-plated, harveyized-steel, all-wool respectability. The Hirschfelds are hand in glove with the *Deutsche Bank,* and the *Deutsche Bank* people are as thick as thieves with the German Government."

"In other words, that offer is O. K.?"

"Sure, Tom. If you want to sell."

Tom Graves shook his bristly, red head. "What knocks me is how that Berlin gang knows about the

Yankee Doodle Glory. Why, man, everybody used to poke fun at that particular prospect hole in the Hoodoos. There wasn't a day in the last twenty years when you couldn't have picked up the Yankee Doodle for a grin and a handful of peanuts, and now . . . Wait!"

They were sitting in the little red-and-gold poker room of the Club and just then Newson Garrett was passing by on his way to the library. Tom hailed him through the open door:

"Say, Garrett! Step in here a moment." He showed him the cable. "What d'you make of it? Half a million chilly ducats for the Yankee Doodle Glory!"

"For a controlling interest in it," rectified the exact assayist. Then he shook his head. "Steep price. Too steep. Those Dutchmen are loco. Brand them before they escape."

"Yes, yes," put in Martin Wedekind. "But the Hirschfeld people are not exactly fools. They have mining interests all over the world, and agents, and correspondents. There must be a reason . . ."

"And they seem to be in a devil of a hurry," said Tom. "'Old Man' Truex struck the vein on the first, and to-day is the fifteenth. Let me figure back."

"You got to the Hoodoos on the third."

"Yes. Back in Spokane on the fifth, and gave you the ore sample the same day."

"Yes," Garrett inclined his head. "I made my assay tests on the sixth, while you went back to the Killicott ranch and asked me to hold my report until your return . . ."

"Which was on the eighth. Of course the news of the strike spread," added Tom.

Wedekind looked up suddenly.

"Garrett," he asked, "Tom told me you sent some of the Yankee Doodle Glory ore samples to New York, to a friend of yours who has a great chemical laboratory?"

"I did. There was that unknown metal which I was unable to separate."

"When did you send it?"

"On the seventh."

"And it reached New York on the eleventh . . ."

"Or the twelfth, Wedekind."

"Let's call it the twelfth." Wedekind cupped his chin in his hands. He was thinking deeply. "Today is the fifteenth," he went on. "Three days' difference. What's the name of your New York friend?"

"The chemist? Oh, Sturtzel. Conrad Sturtzel."

"A German?"

"Yes. We studied together in Freiburg where I took a post-graduate course. First-rate fellow. Very clever. The right sort to find out all about that unknown ingredient." He rose. "Sorry I have to leave you, gentlemen. And—Tom! Take that half-million offer! By all means!"

"Don't you do anything of the sort!" Wedekind said when Garrett had disappeared.

"Why not?" Tom was frankly astonished.

"Because . . . I'll be frank with you. Because Sturtzel is a German, and because that very respectable and very honest firm of Johannes Hirschfeld & Co. . . ."

"You think they'd welsh?"

"No. They'd pay you spot cash in good, minted gold coin of the realm. It's because" — instinctively he lowered his voice—"they are hand in glove with the *Deutsche Bank,* with the German Government. . . ."

"You don't trust the Germans any too much, do you, Wedekind?"

"I don't!" There was veiled bitterness in the older man's voice. "I know them. My brother Heinrich, he writes to me—he asks me to . . . Never mind—never mind! But I tell you I know them. I know their virtues. But I also know—the other side. Tom," he went on very insistingly, "don't you sell that mine. If it's worth half a million to them, as a gamble, a gamble, mind you . . ."

"It's worth that same to me. I'm on. Sure. And I'll have all the joy of developing the property, of working it, of seeing my fortune grow. Why, Wedekind," he went on enthusiastically, "it's bully, perfectly bully! It makes me feel strong, and powerful, and . . ."

Wedekind made a hurried, anxious gesture. "You don't own control, do you?"

"No. It's an even fifty-fifty split with 'Old Man' Truex."

"And he told you he wanted nothing more to do with the mine." He rose. "All right. I'll talk to him. Where does he stay?"

"Up at Eslick's."

"Wait for me here. I'll fix it up for you."

And when Wedekind, ten minutes later, reached the old prospector's dusty, bare room in the Eslick, he found him in the act of lighting his pipe with something that looked suspiciously like a twisted-up cablegram.

He looked up when Wedekind entered.

"Hullo," he said hospitably; "sit down and reach on the shelf yonder. You'll find some liquor there that ain't so bad." He laughed. "Say, Wedekind, some damn fool's tryin' to play a joke on me. Sends me a

telegram from one of them furrin' places an' asks me to sell him control of the Yankee Doodle Glory for half a million . . ."

"Who?"

"Don't know. Didn't look at the signature." Truex rammed the paper spill deeper into his blackened pipe bowl. "An' I don't give two whoops in hell. I'm through with the Yankee Doodle. I'm scared of it."

"That's just what I came here to talk to you about," said Wedekind, leaning across the table. "Listen . . ."

CHAPTER VI

GETTING ON

"Old Man" Truex's conditions were the acme of guileless simplicity.

All he wanted was to be left alone; for as he repeated over and over again with senile persistency, he was scared of the Yankee Doodle Glory and "he didn't want nothing more to do with it."

At first he was all for accepting a small cash remuneration for his past services, and he wanted to give to Tom the entire stock of the company, which in the meantime had been incorporated, free of charge.

"Take it," he said; "there ain't any strings attached."

But finally he was persuaded to accept one-half of the net profits every month as his share, leaving control of the property in Tom Graves' hands.

"Now are you satisfied?" he asked.

"Not yet," said Martin Wedekind, "for what's going to become of your half of the profits in case of your death?"

Truex glared at him through his bushy eyebrows.

"I ain't goin' to kick the bucket for a long while yet!" he growled.

"Sure. Let's hope so. But suppose you . . ."

"Well, if I die, let Tom keep the whole lot."

"Haven't you got any relatives, any family, old-timer?" suggested the latter.

"No." Then, suddenly, as if remembering some-

thing forgotten these many years: "Wait. By the Immortal and Solemnly Attested Heck! I had a sister once, back in York State where I was raised. Silly little goose! Ran away with some measly, fiddle-scratchin', long-haired foreigner, and I ain't ever heard of her nor seen her since. Maybe she had a kid."

"What's her name?" inquired Tom.

"Sally. Sally Truex."

"I mean her married name?"

"Can't think of it, pardner. Makes no difference, though. I tell you what. If I die you just keep what's due me and hand it over to Sally or Sally's kids if they show up, see? Here!" He scrawled a few rude words on a piece of paper and handed it to Wedekind. "I guess that's good enough, ain't it?"

Wedekind read.

"It's going to be bomb-proof in a jiff," he said, and he sent the Club steward for Alec Wynn, the lawyer, who was in the next room playing life pool.

Wynn came in a few seconds later, and Truex's will, for it was no less, was duly and legally attested, witnessed, and sealed.

"Shall I put it in my safe for you?" asked the lawyer.

"I guess so," replied Truex, and Wynn left to finish his interrupted game.

Truex sighed like a man who had successfully accomplished a herculean task. "Well, there we are all cocked and primed! An' as to my share of the boodle you just pay it in every month at the Old National Bank. I've a bit of an account there, an' they'll send me whatever I need when I write to 'em."

"Aren't you going to settle down, now you are wealthy?" asked Tom.

"Me? God, no! I'm going to British Columbia up the Elk River a-ways. A fellow told me last night there's a splotch of sure-enough quartz land up yonder an' I want to have a dig at it."

And so the old prospector packed his telescope grip and was off to the border on the next Spokane & Northern train, leaving Tom Graves entirely in control of the Yankee Doodle Glory.

Given Newson Garrett's report and Wedekind's loyal help, he had little trouble in raising money for the initial development work, and Gamble, the young Pennsylvania engineer whom Wedekind had recommended, went into the task with such speed, zest and efficiency that within a few weeks even the most doubting Thomas on the local mining stock exchange, which met every forenoon in a room of the Hotel Spokane appropriately and conveniently next to the bar room, became convinced that the ore strike in the Yankee Doodle Glory was not an elaborate hoax, with a bait for suckers attached. Consequently there was many a man who groaned at the remembrance that once he had been the possessor of the prospect and that he had been in a hurry to pass it on to the next greenhorn.

Contrary to the accepted and time-honored traditions of Northwestern mining men who have made their fortunes unexpectedly and over night, who come to town on a roaring, tearing celebration, who strike the more unchecked components of local society with the strength and enthusiasm of a flying blast and gather around them a festive crowd of both sexes primed with exuberance and thirst and expectation, Tom Graves leaned instinctively towards the more sober, the more conservative set of which Martin Wedekind was the accepted leader.

Not that he was a prig. He was what is known as a "regular fellow" in want of a better, or worse, word. Good-humored, good-natured, easy-going, generous, he had the gift of spreading about him a wave of happiness and joy.

So it was not altogether because of his rapidly growing bank account in the Old National that he was elected a member of the Club and invited to the best houses, both of proud Seventh Avenue and the more humble North side—the eternal North side of every Western town.

Of course mothers, mothers with daughters of marriageable age, that is, are the same the world over, and since Tom Graves was clean and straight and decent besides being well-to-do, the coming Spokane season was destined to witness a tug of war with Tom as the matrimonial prize; Mrs. Ryan clucking triumphantly when Tom danced the first one-step with Virginia Ryan, Mrs. Plournoy marking down a trick in her favor when the young Westerner led her daughter Cecily to the supper table.

But Tom was blind to all this byplay.

His heart was entirely taken up with Bertha Wedekind.

Dearer she was to him than the dwelling of kings, and, although even in his range days he had always been slightly dandyish, it was for her rather than for himself that gradually he abandoned the more pronounced horse-wrangling mode of dress and appeared in the streets, the restaurants, and the salons of Spokane in the garb of effete civilization—with a few notable exceptions. For he still remained faithful to his floppy, leather-encircled, alkali-stained stetson. He still refused resolutely to wear either vest or gloves.

He still found it impossible to get rid of his straddling, side-wheeling walk, the memory of saddle and bit and dancing cayuse bred to the range game.

Meanwhile, the unknown ingredient of the Yankee Doodle Glory had become the scientific sensation of the hour.

Many a learned body, many a mining school, from Columbia to Denver, either asked for ore samples or sent trained men to make a personal examination of the mine in the Hoodoos.

But nobody was able to discover the nature of the foreign ingredient, not even Conrad Sturtzel, the German chemist in New York, to whom Garrett had appealed and who had an international reputation.

Newson Garrett, though, had been right when he had told Tom that the presence of the unknown metal would not interfere with the mine itself. The underground work progressed speedily and well. The ore smelted without the slightest trouble, and though the miners at first complained of the same sensations, like an echo far-off that had scared "Old Man" Truex away from the Hoodoos and into the uncharted wilds of the Elk River district, they had no lasting ill consequences, no consequences of any sort for that matter.

"It's simply as if you were sand-hogging in a tunnel below a river bed," said Gamble, the engineer, and even that Conrad Sturtzel explained by a lengthy article in the *American Ore Age* in which he proved, very scientifically and long-windedly, that tunnels laid at a certain pitch acted as reservoirs for tone waves and that the foreign ingredient had of course nothing whatever to do with the curious sensation; an opinion which, since it was signed with Sturtzel's name, was accepted by the scientific and mining world.

Thus the double marvel, the financial one of Tom's

sudden rise to fortune and the scientific one of the unknown metal, passed into the limbo of familiar things when—it was late in May of the year Nineteen Hundred and Thirteen, over fourteen months before the outbreak of the gigantic Prussian Crime—a new sensation electrified Spokane society.

For Bertha Wedekind remarked, quite casually, at the occasion of a supper dance given by her chum, Virginia Ryan, that a friend of hers from Berlin was coming to Spokane in a few days.

Virginia smiled superciliously. She had met a number of Germans and made no secret of the fact that she considered them very worthy, very respectable, and frightfully bad form.

"Oh—we'll try and be nice to him," she said.

Bertha smiled triumphantly.

"You won't have to try so very hard," she retorted. "You see, my friend is an officer in a crack regiment, my Uncle Heinrich's regiment. His name is Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede, and you should see him in his uniform—blue and silver! Perfectly gorgeous, my dear!"

Virginia collapsed while Tom, who sat next to Bertha, felt something tug at his heart-strings.

It was later in the evening, as he helped Mrs. Wedekind on with her coat, that the kindly old New England woman put her thin, wrinkled hands on his shoulders and said, with that sudden abruptness of hers, that he needn't worry. "Young girls will be young girls. But—they get over it!"

Tom was taken aback.

"Then you . . . You know . . .?" He stammered.

"Of course. I am a mother, and I have eyes in my head," she smiled, "though I do wear spectacles."

"But . . ."

"Tom dear," said Mrs. Wedekind, "you are a nice boy. I'd love dearly to have you for a son. . . ."

"Or a son-in-law?" laughed Tom, with a return of his old, happy humor.

"Yes, Boy dear. But you must go in and win her by yourself. Bertha is stubborn."

"I'm stubborn myself," rejoined Tom Graves; and he bent abruptly and kissed the old lady on the cheek.

CHAPTER VII

BARON HORST VON GÖTZ-WREDE

BARON HORST VON GÖTZ-WREDE was the exact opposite of the German accepted and perpetrated as typical by the comic sheets, the music halls, and the weeklies with guaranteed over two and a half million circulation.

He was neither short nor plump. His hair was not honey-blond and brushed straight back from a square and stubborn forehead; there was no supercilious upsweep of pointed, curled mustache, and his eyes were neither watery blue nor glassed in by immense, professorial spectacles. He smoked no ell-long, cherry-wood stem, china-bowl pipe, nor did he dine exclusively on such Teuton delicacies as sauerkraut, pickled herrings, liver sausage, veal kidney roast with sour gravy, and nut cake topped by whipped cream.

On the contrary, he was tall and lean and clean-shaven, of a certain angular, feline grace; dark enough to be an Italian with a dash of Moor; polite enough to be a Frenchman of fiction, and dressed in a pronouncedly and aggressively British style. His clothes spoke of a Haymarket tailor, his neckties and socks and blazers and hats of the Burlington Arcades.

He was good-looking, even striking-looking, with his clean, trained down length of limb, his wide, supple shoulders, his narrow hips, and his long, predatory face that sloped wedge-shaped to a cleft chin.

Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede was a cosmopolite,

and he had a disconcerting habit of telling people so.

"Now, please don't take me for one of those fabulous Prussian officers who have swallowed the ramrod with which they were beaten in school," he said in his precise, beautiful English to Miss Virginia Ryan at the first dinner party given in his honor by the Wedekinds. "I assure you that I don't begin my morning prayer with shouting three times *'Hoch der Kaiser!'* nor do I wind up the evening by getting dismally drunk on blond beer and singing some sentimental ditty about *'Die Lore am Thore.'* I am—" he looked into her heavy-fringed, blue, Irish eyes, "well . . . Don't you think that I could easily pass for an American?"

"For an Englishman rather—I should say," replied Virginia Ryan.

"What's the difference?" laughed the Baron. "English or American? It's one and the same, and I . . ." He raised his voice slightly so that it carried the length of the dinner table, "We Germans—have a deep respect, a lasting admiration, even affection for the Anglo-Saxon peoples." He rose, glass in hand, as if carried away by the surging feelings in his heart. "Ladies and gentlemen! Pardon me—I know it's—oh—not the right thing to do, at such an informal little party. But will you permit me to drink to—ah"—looking at the men behind the table, successful men of the Northwest, hearty, well-fleshed, keen Americans with a sprinkling of Britons and Canadians—"to you! The Anglo-Saxons! First in freedom and achievement!"

The toast was taken up. Glasses clinked. Only Tom Graves and Martin Wedekind sat silent and moody.

There was no doubt that the Baron was a great so-

cial success. Too, a social lion. Séventh Avenue and the North side, the Spokane Club and the Country Club, native-born and Canadian-born, vied with each other in entertaining the visitor, who was plentifully supplied with money and had taken a suite at the new Davenport. He spoke freely and ingenuously to the reporters of the local and other Northwestern papers who quizzed him for copy.

"My reasons for coming to America? Oh, curiosity to see with my own eyes if the American women run true to the charming specimens which we see in Berlin, during the season; and anxiety—possibly tinged by a little envy, but you must not print this, gentlemen, if you please—to find out the secret for America's colossal advance in international affairs. For, gentlemen, I own up to it. We of my country are envious of you, and just a little afraid. I hope to Heaven that we shall always be friends—we Germans —and you—and"—he turned with a smile to Bob Defries, correspondent of the Victoria, B. C., *Daily Colonist*—"you—Canadians—British!" and it was natural that the Baron's words were freely printed, quoted, and circulated.

He had brought letters along to Martin Wedekind from the latter's brother in Berlin. Too, Bertha told her father that the Baron and the younger comrades in his regiment had been most attentive to her during her stay in the German capital; and so Martin Wedekind was of necessity forced to play host-in-chief to the Prussian officer.

It was only to Tom Graves that he spoke his real mind.

"I don't like him," he said.

"Nor do I," growled Tom. "I like him about as well as a cold in the head."

And then both would be silent and look guilty. For they were fair and just, and deep down in their hearts they knew that there was no cogent reason for their dislike. On the other hand, Tom was too honest to hide the antipathy he felt, and when he met the Baron he treated him in an abrupt, rasping manner which, putting the odium as it were on him and not on the other, only served to increase his dislike.

"Say, I feel like kicking him," he said one day to Newson Garrett.

"Whom?"

"That foreigner with the unpronounceable, double-barreled name! That German Baron with the hook nose and the British accent and the atmosphere of noble ancestors and the general culpability that goes with it!"

"The ladies like him!" signed Garrett, who had a tender spot in his heart for blue-eyed Virginia Ryan.

"Sure—and . . ." Tom checked himself. "I was going to say that he does the regular Young Lochinvar dope, hands 'em out sob stuff copped from the *Ladies' Own Gazette,* signed Jessica Pinkney and written by a red-haired Mick with a pipe, three inches of stubble, and an overdue board bill. But it isn't fair. He isn't one of those sighing, ogling, hand-kissing society corsairs. He—and I hate like the deuce to own up to it—he's a sportsman, all right. And it isn't only the ladies that like him. The men, too, have fallen for him like weak-kneed nine pins . . ."

"What are you going to do about it?" inquired the logical assayist.

"Me? Nothing! I am going to shake the dust of Spokane off my feet. Temporarily, that is. I'm going up to the Yankee Doodle Glory and have a squint

at things there. My bank account is running up so fast that I'm afraid at times it's all a dream . . ."

And so, the next morning, Tom Graves left town, and two days later found him facing Gamble in the latter's cabin, a long, low building of dovetailed logs, dirt-roofed and chinked with mud, most of its four-paned windows built in to "keep the air out," its tall stove pipe wired and braced, trying to lead an upright life in spite of the furious wind that sometimes boomed from the higher Hoodoo peaks and roared through the draw at the rate of forty and fifty miles an hour.

But Tom was quite happy. This wasn't the range, the Killicott. Yet at least it was the free, the open. It was the untrammeled West; his own!

CHAPTER VIII

THE SECOND OFFER

It was a few days later and Tom Graves was sitting side by side with Gamble in front of the latter's cabin, contentedly rolling a brown paper cigarette, looking out at the dipping, peaking mountains and listening to the sounds of pickaxe and blast that drifted across from the tunnel of the Yankee Doodle Glory, where the miners had begun their early morning shift.

Directly below his feet lay the old stage route, long disused, last memory of the gold seekers who had once followed the glittering metal lure to the Hoodoos. It was still in fairly good condition, ruts and grooves apart, bottled up between rock ridges five hundred feet high, their crevices giving foothold to stunted pines, gnarled fir trees, and an occasional "bearberry" bush, their bases sheltering thick, lacy growths of young spruce. The rocks stood out sharply and threateningly, like gloomy sentinels silhouetted against the tight-stretched sky, while the road beneath lay bathed in purple and umber light.

It was quite early in the morning. The shivering sun rays blinked through the pines and gilded the opposite crags; they trickled down leisurely to a ribbon-shaped granite ledge and a sparkling little brook fringed by bush and willow.

"Lonely country," suggested Gamble, who was a

recent arrival from some old, teeming Pennsylvania mining town.

"Aha! Lonely. And safe," replied Tom, lighting his cigarette and sending a thick plume of smoke straight up into the still air. "No trouble here in the hills. I used to swear by the range. Still do. But I guess old Truex is right. The hills are all right, too. There is no meanness here, no cheating, no swindling, no . . ." And then, looking intently through puckered eyes, "say, if there isn't somebody coming! Down yonder! Along the old road!" and, following Tom's outstretched finger, Gamble saw a tiny, brown spot moving along rapidly between the rock ridges.

"Can't see his face," went on Tom, who had fetched a pair of field-glasses from the cabin, "but traveling in considerable style, whoever he is."

Gamble took the glasses.

"You bet," he replied; "some style!"

For the tiny, brown spot was a low buckboard driven by one man, side by side with another, and was filled to overflowing with pieces of luggage—two Gladstone bags, a plaid roll, a canvas roll, a linen-covered trunk, three guns in pigskin cases, a large creel and fishing rod and a camera.

"Where do you think they are going?" asked Tom.

"Must be coming here. The road leads to Goat Peak. That's the end of it, and there's a pretty smooth ascent from there up to this cabin."

"I guess so. Wonder who it is, though," replied Tom and, half an hour later, while Gamble had walked over to the Yankee Doodle Glory, his wonder grew into surprise and his surprise into dull, unreasoning anger.

For, around an outjutting, frayed rock that marked the end of the Goat Peak Trail, followed by a lanky, perspiring Palouse farmer youth, laden with most of the pieces of luggage that had crowded the buckboard, came Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede, smiling, debonair, superbly sure of himself, with hand outstretched.

"I have heard so much about your free and open Western hospitality that I decided to have a try at it," he laughed. "Here I am! My word!" he continued in his curiously British accents, "you don't seem a bit glad to see me. Have I broken in on the hermit's meditations about peace and the pure life?"

Tom stiffened. Then, very quickly, he stepped forward and shook the offered hand. For, after all, the man of the Far West is very much akin to the desert Arab in his peculiarly rigid code of honor, his peculiarly sweeping code of hospitality; hospitality even to the blood enemy who touches his tent ropes.

"Glad to see you." He tried to give to the words a ring of that welcome which, deep in his heart, he knew to be missing. Then, pointing at the guns and the fishing rod, "Come here for sport? Not much game here, I am afraid, and the trout are as shy as butterflies."

The Prussian officer had paid off the young farmer and sent him on his way. He turned to Tom with a smile of utter, winning sincerity.

"Mr. Graves," he said, "I have been told by men who know that you Westerners are jolly good poker players, pretty hard to bluff, and so I shall put my cards on the table, face up. Of course I am awfully fond of sport and I'd be glad to pot one of your bighorns. But my real reason in coming here was to have a look at that famous mine of yours, the Yan-

kee Doodle Glory. I have heard a lot about it, and I am frightfully curious by nature."

Tom was frankly astonished. He knew that the sensation of the ore strike in his mine was no longer a matter of absorbing interest to any one, and so he said: "Why, that's ancient history."

"Perhaps to you, the Americans. But not to . . ." The Baron checked himself quickly. He bit his lips as if trying to cut off the word he had been about to pronounce. He seemed strangely flustered for a moment, and his English, usually so carefully modulated, so ultra-British in every delicate shade of inflection, suddenly took on a thick, rasping, guttural tang.

"You see," he stammered, "the papers say a good deal about it, and . . ."

Tom Graves took pity on the other's evident embarrassment. He had no idea why the man should be ill at ease, and he dismissed the fact of it as some mad, inexplicable, foreign idiosyncrasy.

"Sure," he said, "that unknown metal. I get you," and he did not notice that the German, at the words, had turned slightly pale and was studying him intently from beneath his lowered eyelids.

"Well," Tom went on, "have a bit of breakfast, and then I'll take you round to the diggings and you can gopher about there to your heart's content."

He said it laughingly. For all at once it had struck him that he had every reason in the world to be glad of the other's presence here in the Hoodoos. As long as he was here, he was away from Bertha Wedekind, and that was a point gained. And so, his native hospitality fired by his love, his jealousy, his self-interest, Tom set about preparing breakfast. He heated up the coffee, threw half-a-dozen slices of fat pork sizzling into

the skillet, and mixed the proper ingredients for that Western culinary marvel prosaically called flapjacks.

"Here you are," he said, when everything was finished and, passing to his guest the frying-pan filled with pork, "have some mountain veal! And say—" laughing, jovial, now thoroughly at his ease, "don't dirty any more plates than you have to. Gamble and I are taking turn and turn about, and this is my day to cook and wash up and get messy generally. Fall too, stranger!"

Breakfast finished, he took Baron von Götz-Wrede to the mine tunnel and into the hands of Gamble while he returned to the cabin, sat himself upon a stone, and smoked, doing nothing successfully and blissfully.

Late that night, after dinner, with their guest in the back room hunting in his Gladstone bag for cigars, Gamble turned to Tom Graves with a sudden, hurried whisper.

"Did you say that fellow's an officer in the German cavalry?"

"Sure. Why?"

"Well, he knows as much and more about mining engineering than I do and, believe me, I am no slouch at the game. He . . ."

"Shut up!" whispered Tom.

But it was too late. The Baron had come into the front room. He must have overheard the last sentence, at least caught the sense and drift of it, for he laughed, very much like a schoolboy surprised in a naughty prank.

"I do know mines, don't I, Mr. Gamble?" he asked. "Well, I am not ashamed of it. You see, we Prussian army chaps, while we like our career, of course get tired of drill, drill, drill all the time. We get

bored to death with saber and lance and martingale. We have to have relaxation of some sort, you know, and I have always taken a great deal of interest in what's going on in the bowels of the earth."

"You're certainly some little expert," commented Gamble admiringly, and the Baron inclined his head.

"German efficiency," he replied, and it was difficult to tell if he was poking fun at himself or at the others.

Gamble went to bed early leaving Tom and his guest in front of the blazing, crackling log fire. Tom was sleepy and happy. He was about to doze off when the German's words startled him into immediate and full wakefulness:

"How much will you take for the Yankee Doodle Glory?"

The American looked up sharply. "You want to buy?"

"Yes. Outright. For cash. Name your figure, Mr. Graves."

The latter did not like the other's abrupt, dragooning manner, and—he *was* a good poker player. He folded his hands behind his head, kicked out his feet towards the full warmth of the fire, and yawned elaborately.

"I don't know as I want to sell," he said finally, with utter carelessness. "I guess I'm sort of stuck on these old Hoodoos. No. I don't know as I want to sell powerfully bad."

"Five hundred thousand?" asked the Baron, taking out check book and fountain pen.

Tom grinned mischievously. "Oh, you carry your munition along, do you? Well, it's no go. I don't want to sell. At least I don't know that I do . . . yet!"

"When will you know?"

"Perhaps next week. Perhaps never."

The Baron gave a short, impatient laugh. "I thought you Americans were such quick, sharp businessmen."

"I'm not a businessman. I'm an ex-cowpuncher, and I've all the time in the world. Let's turn in."

"Verdammt noch 'mal!" The Baron lapsed into hectic, vituperative German. But he controlled himself. "I make that offer six hundred thousand," he continued.

Tom Graves rose.

"Quit tilting the jackpot," he advised. "I'm not playing;" and that was all the answer the other could get out of him though that night. All the following week he returned to the attack, periodically raising his bid until he had reached an even million, and even Tom kicked himself for a stubborn fool. "But," as he explained it afterwards, "I never sell when the other fellow is too damned anxious to buy. It may be punk business, but it's me!"

At the end of the week Tom decided to return to Spokane.

"You can stay here. Gamble'll take good care of you," he told the Baron.

But the German said he would come along to town, and all the way to Spokane he repeated his offer for the Yankee Doodle Glory, raising his bid time and again, and finally driving Tom into an access of American abruptness.

"Stow that nagging. You aren't my wife, nor my mother-in-law, and you aren't even my side-kick. I don't want to sell, and hell, brimstone, and damnation can't budge me when I've made up my mind, see?"

Von Götz-Wrede choked down an angry word. Then he was again his old, suave self.

"Well, never mind. I shall ask you just once more . . ."

"Look here! I told you I . . ."

"Just *once* more . . . before I leave Spokane. You see, I shall leave here to-morrow night."

"Oh, you're off?"

"Yes, my leave is over. Back to the regiment, and the drill."

Tom smiled. He thought of Bertha. Here was one rival at least eliminated for good. So he essayed a mild, white lie. "I'm mighty sorry to see you go."

"And I am sorry to leave. I've had a ripping time. Thanks for your hospitality, and if ever you come to Germany . . ."

"Me—to Germany?" Tom Graves laughed out loud at the idea. "Say—I don't . . ."

"You never know what may happen. Anyway, if ever you happen to be in Berlin, look me up." He was again the soul of sincerity. "We like men like you over there. Strong men, big, powerful, daring, upstanding; and there's one or two things you could teach us . . ."

"Nothing except riding a little pony," smiled Tom.

"Exactly. And that's a lot. You see, I am in the cavalry, call myself a good horseman, have ridden for my regiment at Olympia, in London. But compared to you . . . My word!"

And the young Westerner, touched in his weak spot, decided that the man was not so bad after all and thought to himself that perhaps he would let him have the Yankee Doodle Glory. There was really no sense in not selling.

But, since he considered Martin Wedekind his mentor in all things financial, he ran out to the house in Lincoln Addition that evening and put the case before his friend, in all its details, including the Baron's extraordinary knowledge of mines and mining.

"Shall I sell?" he asked.

Wedekind shook his head. "No. Don't sell to . . ."

"To the Baron?"

"To any German! To anybody unless you know exactly who and what he is. No, no! Don't you ask me to give you any reasons. Just do what I tell you, will you?"

"Sure!"

And so, the next day, when Herr von Götz-Wrede called on him for his final decision he was met by such a staunch, hard "No! I won't sell, and that's flat!" that the German gave up.

"All right, Mr. Graves," he said, waving a careless hand. "All right. Only, please keep it to yourself. Don't speak about that offer I made you. People would think me slightly—oh—touched."

"But why do you . . . ?"

"I am a rich man, I have hobbies, and I like to gratify them. That's all. By the way," shaking hands again, "do come over to Germany and look me up."

"No. I don't want to travel."

"Don't be so provincial. Come on. You're a rich man, a man of leisure. Do come. Promise me that you'll come!"

"No!"

"I shan't take no for an answer." He lifted a threatening finger. "Honestly, unless you promise me, I am going to stay right here in Spokane, and

nag you every day about selling the Yankee Doodle Glory!"

"All right, all right!" laughed Tom. "I promise!"

"You'll come this year?"

"Yes, yes, I promise anything you wish as long's you shut up about that mine!"

"Thanks. That's corking. Here's my address. *'No. 67, Xantener Strasse, Berlin, W.'* I'll be mighty glad to see you over there!"

And there was such a charming, sincere smile on his lips and in his eyes that Tom decided all his former antipathy had been nothing but rank envy and jealousy; and so he grasped the German's hand and cried enthusiastically:

"You bet I'll come!"

CHAPTER IX

EASTWARD HO!

TOM GRAVES went abroad rather sooner than he had imagined he would at the time he had given his rash promise to Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede.

And it was Bertha Wedekind's fault.

About a week after the German's departure, thinking there was now a clear field and no favors, he decided to ask her once more to be his wife. She had been nice to him the last few days and, being in love and therefore self-centered, there was but one construction he could put on her shifting mood—she was beginning to like him better; rather, she was drifting back into that chummy, simple sympathy, not unmixed by tenderness, that had been between them the year before on the Killicott ranch, before she had had her head turned by the Prussian officers whom she had met at her uncle's house in Berlin.

It was on a Saturday night, and the Country Club was giving its weekly hop. More than one couple, tired of dancing, had sought the seclusion of the great, sweeping veranda that framed the Club building on all sides to catch the breeze that boomed down from far Hayden Lake, laden with the sweetness of wood flowers and the tang of wet pine.

"Let's go out. I want to talk to you," said Tom, and he was so masterful that Bertha took his arm and went without a word.

She sat down on a rocker, and he remained stand-

ing in front of her, looming up square and heavy and manly in the drifting moonlight.

"Bertha," he said in a low voice, "a few weeks ago when I was going to tell you that I love you, you did not let me finish. You told me that you . . ."

"I told you that I would not marry you, nor any other American." She was not looking at him, but studied her tiny, narrow foot, arching the instep.

"You will listen to me now," he went on. "You see, I love you. I am mad about you, just plumb mad. I—why, girl, there isn't a thing in the world I wouldn't do for you. Perhaps I am just a fool, just a silly, superstitious fool. But last year, back on the Killicott, when I looked at you, pretty and dainty and well-educated and the daughter of a rich man, when I looked at myself, just a poor horse wrangler with not a cent in my jeans, nothing but my sixty bucks or so to live on, I used to pray. Yes! I prayed to God to give me money!"

"Tom!"

"Wrong to pray for money, you think? Not a bit of it! For when I prayed for money, I prayed for what's best, what's most strong, most decent in me! My love for you! You see, I'm not altogether a sentimental jackass. I know that even the truest love in the world can't make a go of it on sixty bucks a month, that even the truest love in the world has got to eat and drink and—" smiling and leveling a shameless thumb at her dainty little dance frock of lavender tulle, girdled with a shimmering length of blue and silver brocade, "buy one of those things once in a while. Wait," as she started to rise, "I haven't finished yet. My words are—oh—sort of inadequate. If I had you out on the range now, with the wind in my face and a little pony between my

knees, I guess I could speak to you. But here, with these duds on—" ruefully indicating his sober black and white dress suit, "well, I feel cramped and clumsy and very much like a darn fool. But, don't you see . . ." and, suddenly, the inner worth, the inner passion of the man, shone in his eyes. His words caught the glamor that shone from youth, from love, from courage, from revival of old hopes, raising of new banners, and soared up to something closely resembling a lyric pitch: "I worship you, dear! I adore you like—like a queen! I love you soul and heart and body! Why, girl, I hear your voice at night, and it haunts me in my dreams. I've smelt the open range in springtime when all the little unknown flowers peep up overnight and make the air sweet and soft—and you, your presence, leaves just such a fragrance behind!" He gave a short laugh. "Talk like a poet, don't I? But—you see, dear—I'm just mad about you, just plumb mad!"

"You must fight against it," said Bertha, with all the priggishness of youth.

"Why should I? Haven't I got a right to love you? Can I help that I love you?" and he went on, reckless of speech, until his passion had spent itself.

Bertha gave a little sigh.

"Tom," she said, "I am fond of you. I like you like a . . ."

"If you say that you like me like a brother I am going to do something reckless! I love you—nor do I love you like a sister. I love you with a real, honest flesh-and-blood love and . . ."

"Tom!" She looked up and saw the expression in his eyes. Instinctively she lowered her voice. "I am sorry, Tom, very, very sorry. But . . ." she made a little gesture.

He clenched his fists that the knuckles stretched white.

"It's no go, eh?" he asked. "It's because of that . . . that German Baron—damn him . . ."

"You must not swear! I won't have it. You—you are rude and ill-bred and . . ."

"All right, all right!" Tom's temper was fast getting the better of him. "I understand all right. Your head has been turned by those—what does your father call them?—those brass-souled, saber-rattling coyotes . . ."

"Father doesn't know!"

"You bet your life he does! He knew them in his youth. He hasn't got a bit of use for those bragging, swaggering, square-head Dutch officers . . ."

She rose, fire in her eyes.

"You are insulting me," she cried. "I am a German myself!"

"Don't you believe it! You're a plain, every-day, field-and-garden American—just like me, just like your Dad—and that's one of the many reasons why I'm so crazy about you."

"You—you are . . ." The girl was near to crying. "I hate you, hate you!"

"All right. I guess you've made up your mind to marry one of those jackanapes with their pink-and-green monkey jackets, the lightning conductor spikes on their helmets, their haw-haw manners and the bits of window glass stuck in their eyes. You . . ." quite suddenly he recollected himself. He bent his head, like a man submitting to the judgment of Fate. "I beg your pardon, Bertha. I lost my temper. God . . . I love you so . . ."

"I don't want to see you again . . . Never!"

"You won't!"

And he was off at a half run. He grabbed coat and hat, jumped into a taxicab, and drove home.

There he took down the telephone receiver, called for Pacific 6589, and startled Johnny Wall, the jolly, plump little Canadian who directed the local fortunes of the Atlantic steamship lines, out of a sound and dreamless sleep.

"Get me a passage, Johnny! Immediately!"

"What are you talking about? Are you drunk?"

"I am not. I am mad!"

"You sound like it . . ." Wall was about to slam down the receiver, when Tom begged him frantically to wait.

"I'm not mad the way you mean. I am quite sober and quite sane."

"Well—what *do* you want?"

"I want to go to Europe!"

"When?"

"Immediately. Get me a ticket or whatever you call the fool things. And, Johnny, not a word to anybody. I am making a sneak!"

"All right, Tom. I'll fix you up. Come to my office in the morning."

And so, the next afternoon, after a visit to the Old National Bank where he arranged with Donald McLeod, the black-haired Scotch cashier, for transmission of funds, he took train for New York. He did not even say good-by to Martin Wedekind for fear of running into Bertha.

But Wedekind found out about Tom's departure just the same, for Johnny Wall blabbed, and when Tom Graves, who had four days in New York before his steamer sailed, called at the steamship office for his berth, he found there a special delivery letter from Wedekind, wishing him luck on the journey,

and enclosing some lines of introduction to his brother, Heinrich, in Berlin.

"I haven't seen Heinrich for years, in fact not since I was a young lad," added Martin Wedekind. "I did not like him then; he was the regular Prussian incarnation of beef and brawn and damn your neighbors' feelings and your neighbors' pet corns. I don't think that thirty-odd years in the army have improved him any. But he is a colonel of cavalry, and since you are going to Europe, you might as well see all the phases of life there. God bless you, my boy!"

Tom boarded the North German Lloyd liner *Augsburg* at noon, on Saturday.

An hour or two later, the steward handed him a telegram from Spokane.

It read:

"Don't sell the Yankee Doodle Glory.
"(Signed) WEDEKIND."

CHAPTER X

THE MEETING

"Mister Graves!"

The voice was a woman's, low, musical, and irate; and Tom turned quickly.

It was the afternoon of the first day out. For the first time in his life Tom was away from his native, Northwestern heath and confronted by a scene that was not framed by lanky pine and frayed, ribbed rock, by rolling sage land and green-thundering waterfall, studded with little towns set flat, like jewels, into the surrounding plains and straddling in an arrogant, devil-may-care manner in all the cardinal points of the compass, as if to advertise to newcomers fresh from the East that, if they would but wait a year or two, the town would fill up and grow to the next range, and even beyond.

For the first time in his life Tom felt the lap and surge of salt water beneath his feet and so he had been leaning over the top deck rail looking over the great Atlantic that chopped towards the crooked, peaked sky line with an immense roll; and, the ship giving a ruffianly lurch at the same moment, he nearly lost his balance and fell on the plank deck when he recognized the speaker's face.

"Well! Bertha! I'll be eternally razzle-dazzled!"

He held out a big, honest hand to Miss Wedekind, who stood there, dressed in short plaid skirt, low-heeled brown shoes, tweed hat, and a silk blazer of gold and black stripes.

She waved the proffered hand aside. Her violet eyes eddied up with a slow flame of anger.

"I don't want to shake hands with you!" she said.

"Eh?" Tom Graves did not believe his ears. "Aren't you glad to see a face from home? Why, say, I am plumb tickled to see you. I . . ."

The girl stamped her foot.

"I am—oh—angry!" she cried. "Frightfully angry! What do you mean by persecuting me, by following me when you know you are not wanted?"

"Me—persecute—you?" stammered Tom. "Me—follow—you?"

"Exactly! Don't play the stupid! I took the first train for New York, the first steamship out of New York, as soon as Uncle Heinrich cabled that his mother, my grandmother, was sick, near death, and wanted to see me once more. And here you . . . Have you no shame, no decency?"

"Say, Bertha," stammered Tom. "Honest to God, I don't know anything of what you're saying. I guess I left Spokane a few days before you did. Why, I spent half a week in New York, just fretting and fuming to get away. Didn't your father tell you?"

"He did not! And I don't believe you! No, I do not! You are insufferable. Can't you take no for an answer? Do you think, do you imagine for a moment, that you can win me by such silly, ill-bred, rude persecution? Do you think you can bully me into marrying you? Haven't you got any more manhood than that?"

"Look here, Bertha . . ."

"You heard what I said, Tom Graves. And if you dare say a word to me on board this ship, if you as much as smile at me, I am going to complain to the captain. There!" and she swept off while he looked

after her, cap in hand, scratching his red hair, amazement and grief and hurt pride in his honest features, finally relieving his injured feelings by a tremendous:

"Well, I'll be . . ."

"I say! Don't speak out your thoughts so freely, my dear sir!" Another voice came to his ear, a man's voice this time and frankly, aggressively British. "Never say you'll be damned or anything as rash as that before you've tried some of that ripping medicine against it they sell down across the saloon bar, what?"

Tom looked up.

The speaker was a young man about his own age, his own height, though a little broader. His hair (he wore his cap in his hand) was honey-colored and neatly parted down the center; his sack suit was tightly tailored and of an extravagant, hairy, green Harris tweed; his heavy brogues were topped by brown cloth spats; and his face, round, rosy, blue-eyed, open, was ornamented by a tiny mustache and an immense, gold-rimmed monocle.

The final seal to this typical specimen of traveling Briton was given by a short briar pipe clamped between his teeth; and when Tom Graves looked at him, dazed, rather overcome, the Englishman continued:

"My name's Vyvyan, if you want to stand upon ceremonies," giving him his card.

Tom took it and read thereon:

"Lord Herbert Vyvyan
Bury St-Edmonds."

"Mr.—Bury St-Edmonds?" stammered Tom.

"Gad, no! That's my address, home in England. Vyvyan—that's my name!"

"Oh—mine's Graves—Tom Graves!"

Now, for the excuse of the young Westerner, be it said that all his life, though he had met plenty of Englishmen, in the Inland Empire, he had been familiar only with the two types who abound there: the English worker, and the English wastrel.

The former are the men, men of all classes, who come either direct to the Northwest or via Canada and who, in spite of the fact that they are less ready to take out their citizenship papers than the Continental Europeans, mix with the native life, business and social, as oil mixes with oil, thus accounting for the fact, never yet sufficiently dwelt upon, that though in the United States there are German-Americans, Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, and what-not, there is no organized, or unorganized, English-American party, or vote, or even consciousness. The Englishman, he of the worker type, blends with the civic and national life, and his son is altogether an American.

Tom had also met and drunk with and ridden with his share of the second type of English, the wastrels, mostly remittance men who had left their country for their country's good and who received a quarterly stipend from home as long as they remained abroad. There was a vague rumor that some of them were the sons of noblemen, earls and viscounts and so forth, all called "dooks" for short by the gentry of the range, and they were not bad fellows. At least they were plucky.

But this man, Vyvyan, was decidedly not an English worker, and just as decidedly not an English wastrel—and: he *was* a lord; and Tom, out of the ingenuousness of his heart, blurted out a great, loud, tactless:

"Say, for the love of Mike, are you really a lord—honest to God?"

"Right-oh!" came the cheerful reply.

"One of those guys who wear silly little crowns and a whole lot of purple velvet and white fur?" pursued Tom, remembering what he had learned in the movie theaters of Spokane.

"Right-oh again!" Then, seeing that Tom was studying him intensely: "I say, what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing!" Tom scratched his head. "But I always thought—have always been given to understand that all lords are . . . Oh . . ."

"Silly, damned jackasses? Right-oh, the third time! I am one. You have no idea what a silly ass I am—and wait till you meet my first brother, the Duke! Gad! And now, s'pose we go down and see what the maritime Ganymede has to offer in the line of mixed drinks."

Half an hour later, sampling the third of a series of cocktails, "there are three things I admired most tremendously in America," Vyvyan confided: "Your way of preparing oysters, your way of mixing drinks, and the way your women clothe their jolly little tootsies." Tom Graves had already formed a sincere liking for the young Englishman, and it was evident that the latter returned the feeling.

For, with frank and talkative naïveté, he had told the American all about himself.

"I'm in disgrace," he said; "that's why I am tryin' to perk up a bit alcoholically."

"In disgrace?"

"Right. You see, I am a diplomatist."

"You—a diplomatist?" Tom laughed at the thought.

"Can't blame you for laughing," sighed Vyvyan. "I am rather rotten at the game. Was 'steenth secretary at the Washington Embassy and just got the jolly old boot for most frightful incompetency."

"What are you going to do next?"

"Go home and devil my brother's soul. He's the Duke, y'know, and has lots of what you Americans call pull. I s'pose he'll get me some secretaryship in one of those interesting and unwashed Balkan principalities, but he'll have to wait a while until this Washington mess blows over. He won't like it a bit. You see, I'm not over-flush with the ready; rather stony, in fact, and my brother is as stingy as anything. Never mind, old dear, have one more of the liquid?"

"No, thanks. I've had a nose full."

"Right. Let's go down and eat. Ship's filled with Germans and Austrians and all that sort, eatin' peas with steel knives and inhalin' soup through their jolly old ears, so we two might as well sit together and show 'em a solid Anglo-Saxon front, what? Let's go feed!"

That day and the following saw Tom Graves and Lord Vyvyan continuously together. Occasionally the former saw Bertha Wedekind, usually accompanied by a couple of tall, lean Germans who, the Englishman said, belonged to the German Embassy in Washington. Tom was jealous, but he had to grin and bear it. He knew how stubborn the girl was and that she would doubtless live up to her threat and complain to the captain if he tried to address her.

He spoke to but few of the other passengers. He was garrulous and sociable by nature. Too, he had always liked the Germans whom he had known in the Northwest, chiefly Martin Wedekind, though, when

thinking of the latter, he never thought of him as anything but a straight American. But he found it impossible to get on with those aboard the *Augsburg*.

They were mostly German-Americans from New York, Missouri, and the Middle West, bound on a visit to the Fatherland, and while the majority of them wore tiny American flags in their buttonholes and several had broken into hectic dithyrambs as the ship passed the Statue of Liberty, they became less American and more German with every league the steamer throbbed across the Atlantic.

The first day out, a short, gray-haired, dyspeptic butcher from Cincinnati said with a sigh of satisfaction:

"Na, Gott sei Dank, noch 'ne Woche und dann sind wir, wo es nicht jeder Lausekerl für seine Pflicht und Schuldigkeit hält seinen Nachbarn ordentlich zu bemogeln!"—a nasty reflection on American business morals, which was passed over with a smile as an exuberance of homesickness, an exuberance, too, of Teutonic humor.

Gradually, one by one, the American flags disappeared from buttonholes to be replaced in isolated cases by the black-and-white of Prussia and the black-white-red of the German Empire.

Three days out, a stodgy, immense, keen-eyed St. Louis brewer, with diamonds in his cuff links, his shirt, and his necktie (diamonds, as Tom said to himself, earned and paid for in America) complained to the third officer that the library in the reading-room contained "noddings but Yankee drash. Vy don't you haf some goot Cherman liderachoor instead of all dat Yankee *blödsinn?* Somedings like de *Gartenlaube,* or de *Jugend,* or *Simplicissimus?* You oughta haf been

ashamed mit yourself calling dis one Cherman shib, *nicht wahr?"*

Thus it grew. Thus they showed with what solemnity they regarded the oath they had sworn at the time when they had taken out final citizenship papers; and on the fourth day out matters came to a head—"a jolly bloody head," as Lord Vyvyan commented.

For Tom Graves got into an argument with a pale, pimply-faced New York bank clerk by the name of Franz Neumann.

The latter addressed Tom in German. Tom grinned, and said that he had only bought himself a German grammar two days before the *Augsburg* had left port, that he was working hard, but had not as yet mastered more than about fifteen words. Whereupon the clerk replied, talking raspingly through his nose, that *"Bei Gott!* it was an infernal arrogance! What did he mean by sailing on a German ship and expecting the Germans to talk English to him? He was a damned so-and-so, also thus-and-thus American this-and-that . . ."

An argument wound up by Tom's fist descending in a cruel and thumping curve on Herr Neumann's nose; by a running together of stewards and passengers; a raising of voices and avenging Teutonic fists; a blowzy Milwaukee ex-cook crying: *"Ach! Dieser brutale Amerikaner! Schmeisst den Kerl ins Wasser!"* and, finally, Lord Vyvyan coming to the rescue, leveling a few telling blows at the St. Louis brewer who had made a rear-guard attack against the Westerner, and leading the latter away with soothing words and gestures:

"I say, have a drink, old top. Now . . . No, you won't," as Tom, hearing the jeers of clerk and ex-cook

and brewer, turned, eyes puckered, jaw set, fists going like flails, "don't get excited. Odds are against you. Can't lick 'em all together. Lick 'em one by one, presently. Meanwhile, have a drink. Have two drinks. Wow . . . Steady she goes!"

Tom fell, panting, into a chair in the smoking saloon.

"Hell!" he said. "I'm sorry that I ever gave that fool promise to that German Baron!"

"What German Baron?"

"Von Götz-Wrede!"

"What promise?" the Englishman inquired after a while, rather casually, looking into the amber depths of his whisky-and-soda; and Tom told him.

Carried away, he told him everything that had happened since his partner, Truex, had sent him the telegram with the cheering news that he had struck it rich in the Yankee Doodle Glory. He mentioned the unknown metal, the offer by cable of Johannes Hirschfeld & Co., in Berlin, the Baron's arrival in Spokane, the second offer raised to a million cash, Martin Wedekind's warning, and his promise to visit Berlin.

"I s'pose you are on your way there now?" asked Lord Vyvyan.

"Yes. I'm going to get through with it. I want to get back home just as soon as I can . . ."

"You'd better," said the Englishman, in a low voice, half to himself; and Tom looked up sharply.

The Englishman was staring straight ahead. His eyes, usually so round and innocent and ingenuous, were keen, with a hard, curling glitter, like sun rays on forged steel. His lips were compressed into a thin line. The whole man seemed different, changed.

The next moment, noticing that Tom was looking at him, he was his old self again. He screwed in his

monocle. Something like a mask of silliness descended upon his face.

"I say, old dear," he drawled, "let's have another snifter, what?"

CHAPTER XI

THE WIRELESS

HOLDING on to one of the life-boats just the other side of the wireless operator's hut on top deck, braced against the pitch and roll with straddled feet and standing aslant when the gathering wind came in fits and starts, Tom Graves looked out into the west, where the sun had died in a flat disc of unhealthy, decayed brown to give way to a dense bank of olive-tinted cloud that rushed down with the speed of a stage drop, lay motionless upon the sea that was like dirty oil, suddenly changing into a slow, immense roll that sent the ship down a slope and up again.

A moment later, with savage rapidity, the full force of the hurricane struck the *Augsburg,* and she pitched crazily to leeward, taking a drunken lurch into the inky void, straightening again, again tripping like a bulky matron on a waxed dancing-floor, then riding up with a certain measure of heavy, challenging grace. The song of the whipped, tortured air came with a gigantic roar and sob, and Tom, landsman from the rim of his stetson to the curve of his knees where they had gripped saddle leather, decided that discretion was the better part of valor and that the smoking saloon held warmth and comfort.

He turned to go.

Passing the wireless hut, the wind struck him in the small of his back and he tumbled against the door.

It was thus, quite by chance, that he overheard a scrap of conversation which later on caused him to wonder and speculate.

Inside the hut the ship's doctor, a young American, was talking to the wireless operator.

"Sorry," said the latter. "I know you are anxious to send wireless waves to your best girl in New York. But the thing's out of order."

"Out of order?"

"Yes. Has been for two days, and we won't be able to fix it till we make Bremen. Makes no difference though. She's a sound old tub."

"Sure . . ."

Just a scrap of talk, temporarily forgotten, yet stored away in some back cell of Tom's brain, and remembered an hour or two later when, as he was washing in his cabin, Lord Vyvyan knocked at the door, came in, sat himself on the edge of the narrow bed, and begged the American to shake hands with him.

"Sure," said Tom, complying. "What for?"

"To wish me luck. Regular, jolly, sizzling whirlwind of luck, old cock!"

"What's happened?" laughed the Westerner. "Sat in a poker game with that St. Louis brewer and held a royal against his four o' the kind and copped his wad?"

"Rather not. Much bigger. Guess again."

"Fell in love?"

"My word, no! Can't afford to. I'm stony, you know. But"—he rubbed his hands—"my brother, the Duke, you know, did a damned rapid bit of wire pulling. In again, out again! Chevied out of the Washington embassy about a week ago for frightful incompetence—*and* . . ."

"What? Can your mysterious dope!"

"Chevied into a fat attachéship—where, d'you imagine?"

"Paris."

"No. Berlin. Corkin'—what? Same bully old place you're bound for. Just got my appointment by wireless."

Tom looked up sharply.

"Did you say—by wireless?"

"Right-oh. The Duke is a terribly modern sort of chap. Takes to all these jolly new inventions like a fish to water."

"Seems so," rejoined Tom dryly.

He remembered the scrap of conversation he had overheard on top deck: "Wireless out of order. Has been for two days." There was no doubt that Vyvyan was lying. But he decided to keep the knowledge to himself. He had an idea that the diplomatic game was the same as poker, and bluff, another word for lying, is permissible, even virtuous, if you have sweetened the pot to the tail end of your roll and have hopes of filling an inside straight. And . . . He cut off his thoughts, and stretched out a hearty hand.

"Tickled to death, old man," he said.

"So am I. Let's have a drink. By the way, are you going straight from Bremen to Berlin?"

"Yes."

"Fine. We'll travel down together. I have to report to the Embassy immediately. Frightful bore, though."

Twenty-four hours later, Bremerhaven came out of the low, coiling shore fog in a neat checker-board pattern of white and gray and bister brown, punctured here and there by the spires of square churches, the

solid bulk of some braggart warehouse, the rigging and funnels and smoke-stacks of ships that rode breast-high above the stone quays. It came stolidly, massively, German to the core, striking Tom's ears with the cumulated sound waves of hundreds of lips speaking a strange, guttural language that made him feel homesick, and caused him to hold close to Lord Vyvyan as to an anchor in a storm.

The farewells of passengers. An exchange of cards and of promises, soon forgotten, to write, to call, to keep in touch with one another.

Then the short ride to Bremen itself, through a wedge-shaped stretch of rolling fields with plump Holstein cattle that looked ridiculously small and ridiculously tame to Tom's range sense, and through a sweep of box-like suburban houses, each framed by a bit of lawn that was almost English in its moist, pristine greenness.

Bremen at mid-day. Bremen—clean-cut, hard, preoccupied, blending the tortured Gothic of ancient Hanseatic buildings with the pinchbeck, stuccoed efficiency of modern Germany.

"Haben Sie was zu deklariren?" a customs inspector, in blue with narrow gold braid, truculently mustached and bearded, asked of Tom.

Tom became flustered. The little German he had learned flew away like rubbish in a wind, and he looked appealingly at Vyvyan.

The latter laughed.

"Right!" he said. "I'll be dragoman," and he addressed the official in fluent German for which afterwards he apologized, really apologized, rather shamefacedly.

"You see, old fellow," he said, "when I was a little

nipper they deviled my young soul with governesses and *Fräuleins* and tutors and what-not. Taught me German . . ."

"And French?"

"Rather!"

"And a few more assorted lingoes?" suggested Tom dryly.

Vyvyan looked up quickly. But Tom *was* a poker player. There was no twinkle in his eyes, only an honest question, and the Englishman said that "Yes!" He had quite a few languages at his command.

"But keep it under your hat," he added. "I, well, you wouldn't understand, being an American. But we Englishmen, Englishmen like me, y'know . . . have the devil's own horror of being thought clever or gifted. Not that I *am* clever," he wound up hurriedly.

"Oh, no!" Tom's accents were ingenuous and sincere.

"But I do speak languages. Can't help it. They crammed me no end. Frightfully sorry and all that. And now—" turning to a taxicab driver dressed in brown, red-faced and with a nose that beaked away from the plump, shiny cheeks at a tremendously exaggerated angle, *"Nach dem Bahnhof! Rasch!* The next train for Berlin leaves in a few minutes," he explained to Tom, "unless you want to stay over in Bremen for a day or two?"

"No. I don't."

Tom shook his head and his eyes followed Bertha's lithe figure, dressed in a becoming greenish tweed, a tiny toque pressed deep over her silken tresses. She was accompanied by a tall, elderly man in the uniform of the Uhlans of the Guard, in tightly fitting regimentals of dark blue, a double stripe of crimson run-

ning down the trousers and disappearing in the high, lacquered riding-boots, crimson collar and plastron, epaulettes of heavy twisted gold braid, and the *uhlanka,* the helmet with its Polish top-piece that made it look like a glorified mortarboard, tilted slightly over the right eye. The saber, carried on a long chain, clanked belligerently against the ground.

He turned when he heard Tom's unmistakable American voice, and Tom saw a full, round, high-colored face, not unhandsome with its well-shaped lips brushed by a small, iron-gray mustache, its long, straight nose, and small ears set close against the head.

The officer bent from his great height and spoke to Bertha. Tom saw her shake her head, as if angrily, turn, look at him, then whisper a quick word to the German.

The latter gave a short laugh, patted her on the shoulder, and walked up to Tom with outstretched hand.

"You are Mr. Graves?" he asked in English.

"Yes . . . Sure . . ."

"Charmed! Charmed!" The other saluted. "I am Colonel Wedekind—Colonel Heinrich Wedekind. Martin's brother!"

CHAPTER XII

COLONEL WEDEKIND

Tom was flustered.

He did not know what to say or how to behave with Bertha a few feet away looking on very disdainfully and very impatiently, evidently intent on not recognizing him.

He turned for moral support to Lord Vyvyan—who had slipped away. He saw his broad-shouldered form disappear in the taxicab, the roof of which was piled high with an assortment of extremely British-looking luggage: from golf sticks to plaid roll, from pigskin Gladstone bag to a bundle of canes and umbrellas.

Tom's first idea was that Martin Wedekind must have cabled to his brother in Berlin. He could not have written, since Tom had taken the first steamer out of New York, and so there would not have been margin enough for a letter to go by the same ship, reach the German capital, and give the Colonel time to get to Bremen. Perhaps Martin Wedekind had included the news of his coming in the wire advising that of his daughter.

Tom was surprised at the thought. But he was even more surprised when the Uhlan's next words showed him that no such cable had been sent or received.

"Captain von Götz-Wrede told me you were coming, Mr. Graves."

"But . . . I didn't tell him when I was coming."

The Colonel laughed.

"My dear sir," he said, "you didn't have to. The famous owner of the no less famous Yankee Doodle Glory coming to Germany! Why, sir, the names on the passenger list have been cabled over here and your intended visit has been duly heralded in certain sections of our press. Charmed, my dear sir, charmed!"

And when the young Westerner, in want of something better to say, mentioned that Martin Wedekind in Spokane had given him a letter of introduction to his brother, searched in his pocketbook, found the note, and handed it to the German, the latter read it, ejaculated once more his favorite slogan of: "Charmed, my dear sir, charmed!" and linked his arm familiarly through that of Tom's.

"I have a compartment reserved for myself and my niece. Please do me the honor of sharing it."

Again Tom was not sure what to say. Lord Vyvyan had driven off. He was in a foreign land, for the first time in his life, and everything seemed topsy-turvy to him. Even as simple an action as calling a porter assumed the shape of an immense and embarrassing predicament. He would have liked to accept the Colonel's kindly offer.

On the other hand, there was Bertha, looking through him with stony eyes.

What excuse could he give?

He only knew that he could not tell the officer about the tiff he and the girl had had on shipboard. So he took a deep breath like a man about to risk a cold plunge, accompanied the other like a lamb led

to the slaughter and positively quailed when Bertha acknowledged his greetings with an icy word.

A short drive through the Bremen streets brought them to the depot, where the Colonel excused himself for a few minutes to see about some telegraphic messages he had to send off.

Tom was alone with Bertha. He looked at her, and she looked at him. Both were silent, until Tom could stand it no longer.

And he spoke:

"Say, Bertha!"

"Yes, Mr. Graves?" haughtily.

He was going to go back to the old subject which had caused the misunderstanding on shipboard, to explain, but when he opened his mouth, the first words which came were:

"Say, I'm just crazy about you! Just plumb crazy!"

The words were spoken. More came. He could not restrain them. So he gave up the attempt and surrendered himself to his passion, poured out in a riotous torrent of speech, flavored with the deep, decent, clean love that was his, flavored, too, with the tang of the range . . . and it sounded strange here, amidst the brassy, pompous, unpersonal efficiency of the German railway depot, with the head station master, in a military uniform, bullying the sergeant of police, girded and armed like a warrior about to step forth to savage combat, the sergeant bullying the policemen, the latter transferring the compliment to the public, who continued it on to the railway porters, the latter passing the disciplinary buck to the cab drivers who, seeing nobody whom they could bully in safety, took it out of their horses' hides.

Amidst the roar and riot of it Tom's words seemed homely, simple. They seemed out of place and tinged with a certain nostalgic melancholia, and it was perhaps that which went to the young girl's heart and caused her to droop her eyelids.

"Why, Tom," she said, faltering a little, "you must not . . ."

"Mustn't I? You just bet I must! How do *you* know what's going on in my heart, Bertha? Say—at times my love fairly, oh, chokes me, and . . ." He collected himself. He had spoken with a louder voice than he had intended, and some of the *Augsburg's* passengers had stopped and chattered, pointing and giggling, amongst themselves. "And there's something else I got to tell you," he went on in lower tones. "I had no idea you were going to Germany. I didn't mean to persecute you. Honest to God, I didn't! Won't you believe me—please?"

She looked at him. She saw the honest purpose, the honest dignity, the honest truth in his eyes, and she inclined her head.

"Yes, Tom. I do believe you!"

"Bully!" was his simple comment as he squeezed her hand. "And say, won't you . . ."

The rest of his sentence was swallowed in the suck and rush of the incoming train and a moment later the Colonel returned, smiling, officious, over-polite, and bundled the two young Americans into a first-class compartment marked: *"Reservirt."*

The last Tom saw was Lord Vyvyan entering the next carriage. He turned as if to address him, but the Englishman winked rapidly and shook his head.

It was clear that he did not want the other to speak to him or recognize him just then.

But Tom did not mind.

For he sat next to Bertha, and with a little shy pressure of her soft hand she told him that she had forgiven him, woman like, for something he had not been guilty of.

CHAPTER XIII

BERLIN

WHATEVER prejudices Tom Graves may have had against Colonel Heinrich Wedekind disappeared during his first twenty-four hours in Berlin and he told himself that either the man must have changed to his advantage during the long years when Martin had not seen him, or that the latter must have been mistaken in his judgment of his brother's character.

For, if anything, Martin had warned Tom against Heinrich in the special delivery letter he had sent care of the steamship office in New York, and here was the Colonel the very image of friendliness and consideration.

True, the man was at times over-polite; with the sort of politeness, different from the spontaneous politeness of the American, which is the result of broad, national kindliness, from the French, which is a racial trait and a virtue bred by logic since it is such an effort to a Latin to be rude, from the English, which is careless and supremely sure of itself, from the Spanish, which is a marvelously delicate art . . . With the sort of politeness which seemed to have been scientifically and efficiently measured, probed, manufactured, chiseled, clouted, and cut into patterns, distributed by order of the Government, drilled, and trained in a mathematical fashion, together with the three *R*'s. A rectangular, a self-conscious, a holier-than-thou politeness!

But that apart, the man did everything in his power to make Tom feel at home in a strange land.

For it was he who fell discreetly into a doze, in the railway carriage, when he noticed the young Westerner's naïvely clumsy attempts to speak to Bertha in an undertone. It was he who steered him through the throng and mazes of the *Lehrter Bahnhof* when the train arrived at the capital. It was he who insisted, when Tom wanted to go to a hotel recommended to him by the desk clerk of the New York hotel where he had put up, that he would be more comfortable in a little flat in the West end, on the Kurfürstendamm.

"Snug little four room affair," said the Colonel, "nicely furnished. Belongs to a friend of mine who left town for six months or so and wants to sublet it."

"But," smiled Tom, "I'm not going to stay long in Berlin."

"Na, na!" laughed the Colonel. "We're not going to let you get away from here for quite a while. Better take the flat. It's complete in every detail, and my friend has even left his English-speaking valet behind."

Finally Tom accepted, and an hour later saw him installed in a comfortable, compact apartment overlooking the broad, pretentious boulevard known as Kurfürstendamm, which runs in a shiny sweep from the *Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniss* Church to Halensee—a generation ago a thickly wooded pine forest, to-day the most swagger of swagger suburbs, a Berlin Westchester.

The rooms were all the Colonel had said, and so was the valet, a small, thin, clean-shaven man of about thirty with a perfect command of the English lan-

guage, including even a working knowledge of American slang which he explained, rather apologized for, when Tom asked him, by bowing and saying that he had spent some time on the other side of the Atlantic as valet to an attaché of the German Embassy in Washington.

"Well, if that isn't bully!" exclaimed Tom. "Been to America, have you? Why, that makes me feel real home like. Here. Have a smoke," opening his cigarette case, "Mr . . .?"

"Krauss!" said the man, bowing again.

"Cut out the wavy motion. You'll injure your spine, Mr. Krauss."

"No, no—I beg your pardon—not *Mister* Krauss! Just Krauss!" And he added: "May I venture to suggest, sir, that valets are simply addressed by their family names in Germany and"—he coughed discreetly—"that a German gentleman does not offer his cigarettes to a servant?"

"Don't he? Well—this American gentleman does," laughed Tom, good-naturedly.

But when Krauss blushed, positively blushed, shaking his head in speechless embarrassment, Tom felt sorry for him.

"All right," he said. "Don't you worry. I'll smoke it for you. And now . . . What exactly are you supposed to be good for?"

"Anything, sir, anything!"

"Pretty large order that, Krauss!"

"Yes, sir. I served in some of the best houses in Berlin, sir."

"You have? All right. Let's try you. Know how to make flapjacks?"

Krauss opened his eyes wide. "Flap . . . Did you say—flap . . . ?"

"Jacks! Sure. Flapjacks! No savvy? Cute little yellow cakes, all hot and sizzlin', and drowned in maple syrup? No? Well, I got to eat some or bust!"

"Ah, it is food?"

"Sure. What d'you think it is?"

The valet curdled his leathery features into a smile.

"I can make a little of the French cuisine," he suggested.

"Not on your life! I ate that on board ship. French cooking mixed up with German! Chicken broth with prunes! Sour herring with chocolate sauce! Little dimpled spring peas stuffed with garlic! No! Flapjacks is what I want, and flapjacks is what I'm going to get. Got flour in the kitchen, eggs, sugar, milk, baking powder, syrup?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fine and dandy. Lead the way. I'll make 'em myself!"

And to the German's evident horror, he took off coat, vest, and suspenders, rolled his shirt sleeves to the elbows, and invaded the shiny, immaculate kitchen, whistling *Casey Jones* at the top of his lungs.

"Don't look so all-fired flabbergasted!" consoled Tom. "I'm going to have a little party all by myself." Suddenly he laughed. "Wait. Got such a thing as a telephone in Berlin?"

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir."

"Bully. Ring up Lord Vyvyan and tell him . . . No!" he shook his head. "I'm a darned fool. I forgot to ask him his address."

The valet bowed. "Lord Vyvyan is at the British Embassy."

"Sure. That's where he hangs out. But—" Tom looked up sharply—"how in hell do you know?"

The valet coughed. He blushed a little.

"A—a telegraphic report in the Berlin papers," he murmured, "advising his appointment . . ."

Tom grinned.

"More wireless cabling without wireless?" he laughed, amused at the other's discomfiture. "Say! Europe isn't asleep by a darned sight. She can sure teach us Americans some! Well—scoot! Put a poached egg in your shoe and beat it! Ring up Vyvyan and tell him to come round here. Tell him to bring along an appetite—and say—some whiskey. Rye, Bourbon, or, at the worst, Canadian Club, unless there's some in the kitchen."

Krauss hurried out while Tom busied himself with flour and milk and baking powder. He was very happy. Bertha had forgiven him. She had asked him to call, and through the open window the warm summer air brushed in, sweet with the scent of birch trees and linden blossoms, and a great crimson sun sinking slowly in the west.

"I beg your pardon, sir," came Krauss' voice from the threshold.

"Sure. What is it?"

"Just as I stepped to the telephone, the bell rang. It was Colonel Wedekind telephoning."

"Yes?"

"He begs you to come to his house for dinner tonight. At seven o'clock sharp, sir."

"But I asked you to call up Lord Vyvyan!"

"I am sorry, sir. The Colonel wouldn't take no for an answer."

"Did you tell him I was going to ask Lord Vyvyan?"

"No, sir. I didn't have a chance. He wouldn't take no for an answer. Absolutely wouldn't. And he says you are going to meet an old friend at his house."

"An old friend? At his house? Well, I guess I'd better go. We'll leave the flapjacks and Vyvyan for to-morrow, Krauss."

The latter bowed. "Yes, sir. Very good, sir."

Tom Graves went to his bedroom, where Krauss had already opened the trunks and distributed their contents.

"Say, Krauss," went on Tom, "I guess they'll be all dressed in their best soup and gravy at the Colonel's, eh?"

"Yes, sir. There will be mostly officers, and they'll all be in full uniform, sir. May I"—he coughed—"may I suggest that you wear—ah, evening dress?"

Tom glared at him.

"Say!" said he. "I know what to wear all right, all right. You may have served in some of the best houses in Berlin, but believe me—I have danced in some of the best houses in Spokane. I know. Those little chocolate soldiers will all be in their best bib and tucker, pink and raspberry and sky blue and juicy green. And—decorations! I know. I've seen pictures." Suddenly he laughed. "Say! I got an idea! A real, twenty-two carat, all-wool idea! I'm going to do considerable honor to-night to my native West!"

And he let out a high-pitched, blood-curdling war-whoop which caused the irascible banker on the floor below to speak to his man servant who in turn, knocking discreetly at the back door of Tom's apartment,

to be told by Krauss that an American had taken the place.

"Yes. *Ein Amerikaner! Ein ganz wilder*—a perfectly wild one!"

The communication caused the irascible banker to slam his clenched right fist against his left palm.

"Ach Gott!" he exclaimed. *"Ein wilder Amerikaner! Schrecklich!"*

His servant bowed in silent sympathy. "The American gentleman's valet told me that his master is going to dine to-night with Colonel Wedekind of the Uhlans of the Guard."

The banker sat up straight.

"What?" he asked. "With Colonel Wedekind—in the most exclusive military clique of Berlin? With Colonel Wedekind, the Emperor's friend? Then he must be something very big in his own country, wild or not wild. Minna!" he called to the other room where his wife, large, elderly, not bad looking in a blowzy, amorphous way, was reading the evening paper. "Minna! Early next week we must send our cards to the American gentleman upstairs . . ." And husband and wife fell to talking.

In the meantime, the *wilder Amerikaner* had finished dressing. He entered the taxicab which Krauss had summoned, heard the valet give the driver the Colonel's address—"Dahlmann Strasse No. 67"—and chuckled quietly to himself.

Once or twice he opened the light top coat he wore and looked down at the lapel of his evening dress.

"Sure," he mumbled, "I'm going to do considerable honor to-night to my native West!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRETCHING OF THE WEB

It was about five minutes after seven when the *Bursche,* the Colonel's military servant, an immense, chubby-faced, curly haired Pomeranian peasant lad whose legs in their tight trousers looked like plump sausages, whose chest beneath the crimson cloth plastron was exaggeratedly round and extended, like a pouter pigeon's, and whose hands in white cotton gloves looked like those of a German edition of Fred Stone in the rôle of the "Scarecrow," opened the double doors of the Wedekind salon and announced in a stentorian voice:

"Herr Graves!" which he pronounced as if it were spelled "Graafase."

Tom, a sunny smile on his face, stepped into the room, shook hands first with the Colonel, who greeted him effusively, with the Colonel's wife, a tall, raw-boned woman in cut purple velvet and diamonds, with a hooked nose, very intelligent black eyes, a fringe of false reddish hair falling over her forehead, and the voice of a grenadier, and was then introduced the rounds of the company. There was one civilian, a Professor Conrad Heffer, a small, spectacled man in illy fitting evening dress and a crumpled white necktie that had worked its way past the collar and was threatening the professor's tiny, red ears. The other guests were all officers and their wives, in full regimentals, some in the uniform of the Uhlans, others

in the cream and silver of the Cuirassiers of the Guard, and one dapper, bowlegged man in the crimson and gold of the Potsdam Hussars. All wore decorations, and Tom, who held his left hand over his lapel, chuckled to himself as he noticed it.

"Charmed! Delighted!" some of the officers said in English, clicking their heels and bowing from their waist lines in rectangular fashion.

Others gave German words of greeting . . . And even Tom knew that it was different from the German he had heard on shipboard, on the customs pier, and in the railway stations: it was snarling, cutting, pronounced with a jarring twang:

"Grosse Ehre!"

"Ah! Kolossales Vergnügen!"

"Servus! Servus!" from a South German.

Finally the Colonel introduced him to a short, broad-shouldered gentleman sitting on a green plush sofa at the other end of the room, very pompous and very erect—"like some darned idol in a Chink joss house," thought Tom—who wore the uniform of a general and whose breast outshone all the others in its splendor of stars and medals.

Colonel Wedekind clicked his heels and bowed very deeply.

"Königliche Hoheit—Royal Highness!" he said, in an awestruck whisper, "permit me graciously to introduce Mr. Graves, the American gentleman of whom I spoke to you!" and, in Tom's ear: "His Royal Highness, Prince Ludwig Karl, the Emperor's cousin!"

His Royal Highness rasped something about *"Vergnügt!"* while Tom, chuckling to himself for the first time since he had entered the salon, took his left hand from the lapel of his coat, exposing an enor-

mous gold medal, set with diamonds, and barbarously ornamented with various designs—the figure of a cowboy riding a refractory mare and waving his stetson, that of an Indian, of a buffalo charging head down, and the whole surmounted by an enameled American flag.

Prince Ludwig Karl opened his eyes wide.

"I—I . . ." He said, in halting English, "may I inquire what decoration you are wearing? I—ah—I thought I was familiar with all foreign orders—eh?" turning to the Colonel, who bowed and seemed flustered.

Tom laughed out loud in the innocence of his heart, sure that the Prince and all the others would fall in readily with his Western sense of humor.

"Say, Prince," he exclaimed in a hearty voice that carried the length of the room, "I knew all you fellows would be decked out like cattle at a country fair, with medals and ribbons and all that—seen it in the movies—" touching, to the terrible consternation of the assembled company, the Red Eagle of the First Class, Prussia's highest decoration, that blazed on the Prince's chest, "and so I said to myself I was going to do the right thing by Spokane and the whole Northwest. Swell little medal this, don't you think? Won it at the Pendleton round-up for breaking the broncho-busting record. Take a look at it, Prince! Believe me—the boys had to chip in considerably to pay for it!"

It was a familiar voice which broke the pall of utter, horrified silence that had followed Tom's little speech.

"Well, Graves, I see you kept your promise!" and Tom knew who the old friend was of whom Colonel Wedekind had spoken over the telephone, Baron Horst

von Götz-Wrede, the German officer who had wanted to buy the Yankee Doodle Glory; and "Yankee Doodle Glory" was the only word which Tom caught from the flood of German which the young officer was whispering to the Prince, causing the latter to come out of his indignant trance and to wave a condescending hand in the direction of the young Westerner.

The Baron took Tom by the arm.

"I am so glad you kept your promise," he repeated. "It was awfully decent of you to break your engagement with Lord Vyvyan."

Tom was about to give an astonished reply, for he remembered that Krauss had told him he had not had a chance to tell the Colonel about the invitation to Vyvyan. But his first surprise was quickly swallowed in a second when the Baron, still blithely rambling on, advised him jocularly to be careful how he applied his "charming American sense of humor with us stodgy Germans. We want you to like us, Graves, and we'll take corking good care of you. We'll see that you get into no more such Homeric scrapes as you did with that fellow Neumann aboard the *Augsburg.*"

"Say!" This time Tom was amazed. He had nearly forgotten about the little contretemps with the bank clerk, and here it was being quoted at him on his first day in Berlin. He was familiar with the quickness and shrewdness of American reporters, but it seemed that their German colleagues—for it could not be anything else—had them beaten by many miles.

He was going to say something of the sort when the German Baron, seeing the expression of surprise in Tom's honest eyes and feeling instinctively that he had been guilty of some error of judgment, quickly and successfully changed the conversation. He

pointed at Bertha, who was just then coming into the salon, a charming figure in her dress of white Chinese crepe with a tunic of rose-pink chiffon, the whole covered with a very spider's web of silver beads and silver thread.

She was walking by the side of an old lady, dressed in black, with snow-white hair and snapping brown eyes.

"I am not a jealous man," lightly laughed the Baron, walking away and leaving Tom a clear field.

The latter stepped up to Bertha as straight as an arrow.

"Hello, Bertha!" he said. "You're a mighty comforting sight for sore eyes."

The girl smiled.

"Grandmother," she said, turning to the old lady, "this is Tom Graves, a good friend of mine from Spokane."

"Grandmother?" exclaimed Tom. "I thought—why—" he stammered, hesitated, then went on in an undertone. "I thought your grandmother was dangerously ill . . . Not expected to live—and that's why you came over here in such a hurry!"

"It was a mistake, Tom," she said. "Just a mistake in the transmission of the cable. Some words were misspelled."

And the next moment the *Bursche* opened the doors to the dining-room, announcing dinner:

"Abendessen is servirt, Frau Oberst!"

"Sounds good to me," laughed Tom, tucking Bertha's hand under his arm. "I'm as hungry as a bear!"—and, unceremoniously, used to the free ease of the West, utterly ignorant of the finely shaded rules of etiquette, he walked into the dining-room just one step ahead of His Royal Highness.

CHAPTER XV

ANONYMOUS

It was not as if Tom Graves had been slow-witted or unobserving of what was going on about him.

No man of his ancestry, straight American, Scotch and English, descendant of sturdy, independent, courageous, fairly well-educated people who for generations had not felt the pinch of want nor the lessening of mentality that goes with it, who had lived away from the reek of city slums yet away, too, from the stultifying influence of meager, worked-out farms, who following the keen call in their own brains, their own imagination, had taken the trail of the ever-broadening Western frontier from Virginia via Kentucky, Kansas, and California to the Northwest; no man of his bringing up and early surroundings, with the sweep and tang of the open range about him, and the range of a decade or so ago where often a man's quickness of wit counted as much as his quickness on the draw; no such man could be slow, could be entirely unobserving.

What was wrong with him was a national American fault, rather habit, which blinded him to everything that went on about him during this, his first, visit abroad except his love for Bertha Wedekind and the frivolous, shifting interests of the passing minutes.

A national habit which caused him to see foreigners entirely through the smoked, distorting spec-

tacles of provinciality and, in judging them, to accept certain cut-and-dried verdicts and well-defined standards that were nearly always the result of frivolous newspaper comment, of light fiction, of music-hall catchwords, of a motion pictures director's abysmal ignorance, of smart, would-be witty remarks coined by returned travelers!

Standards hoary with age! Standards more hoary with lies! Yet standards accepted and repeated!

To Tom Graves (and small blame to him for believing it since the majority of his countrymen, including even those who, thanks to a better education, a better chance to see and compare, should have known better, shared his belief) a Frenchman was a man who wore a flat-brimmed, comical silk hat, white spats, and a pointed beard, who gesticulated and shrugged his shoulders, lived rather exclusively on pastry and cloudy, opalescent absinthe, had neither manhood nor stamina nor virtues—Verdun in those days was only a geographical term!—and spent his hours of leisure fighting bloodless duels and flirting with the wife of his most intimate friend. The typical Russian was an enormous, bearded half-savage who ate candles, got dismally drunk upon raw spirits, called his fellow Russian "Little dove!" and "Little brother!" and amused himself by roasting Jewish babies on a spit.

And the German was simple, good-natured, naïve, even stupid; a man who wept copious tears into his beer glass, sang the *Lorelei,* and was as guileless as the whitest, woolliest, softest baby lamb that ever gamboled on the green.

Thus small blame to the young Westerner that he did not notice what was going on below the surface in Colonel Wedekind's dining-room, what had been going on about him ever since he had taken ship and

even before: in fact, ever since Newson Garrett had discovered the presence of the unknown metal in his assay of the Yankee Doodle Glory ore.

Tom was a stranger to the word Intrigue.

Of course he was aware of occasional lapses from the straight and narrow path of truth on the part of some as, for instance, when Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede mentioned the broken engagement with Lord Vyvyan although Krauss had told Tom that he had not said a word about it to the Colonel. He had also been taken a little aback that the Colonel knew he had taken passage on the *Augsburg,* that von Götz-Wrede was familiar with his fight on board ship, and that the cable summoning Bertha from Spokane to Berlin should have been so thoroughly distorted in transmission.

But he dismissed and condoned it all as an instance of European characteristics. Generally European; not typically German any more. For to him all Europeans were slightly mad.

"Otherwise," as he explained to Bertha during dinner, "the poor simps wouldn't insist on living in Europe with all the Northwest to choose spots in for their wigwams!"

One of the mad European characteristics—and for this he had the man's own words at the time when he had begged him not to speak about his stubborn intention to acquire the Yankee Doodle Glory since people might make fun of him—was the Baron's returning to the subject when dinner was over and he had drawn the horse wrangler into a corner of the salon.

"Look here," replied the Westerner, "that subject is taboo. You told me you would never speak of it again if I came to Berlin."

The Baron laughed.

"Did I?" he asked, lighting a cigar.

"You sure did, sonny!"

"Well—I can't help it. Here you are in my clutches, helpless, what? And you must listen to me."

"Why must I?"

"Because the Prince . . ."

"The fellow with the decorations and the grouch?"

"The same. You see, this is not America. Germany is not a Republic. A chap like myself simply has to kowtow to a man like the Prince. I told him quite casually about my trip to the West, mentioned the Yankee Doodle Glory, and he . . ." He was silent, then went on in a whisper. "You know," touching his forehead significantly, "some of our German royalty are slightly—oh . . ."

"Loco? Too much inbreeding. Just like horses. Sure, I know."

"Well, there you are, Graves."

"What d'you mean there I am?"

"Mad or not, Ludwig Karl is a Prince of the Royal House and a big man in the war office. He can make me or break me. And he's got it into his head that it's up to me to buy the Yankee Doodle Glory. I was a fool ever to have told him!"

"But why should he be so nutty about it? For the Lord's sake, pipe me the reason, man!"

"Because—well—the Prince is one of those thorough paced Germans, not a cosmopolite like myself. He thinks that whatever is German is right, and whatever is foreign is wrong."

Tom inclined his head. "No wonder the poor old gink is loco!" he said with conviction.

"Yes, yes," agreed the Baron. "But that's the way

the field lays and—you must pardon me, old chap—he thinks that I, being a German, should be able to persuade you, an American, to sell whatever I want to buy. Sort of national conceit, I suppose. National stubbornness, too."

"Well," laughed Tom, who had dined and wined well, who felt in a generous mood, who was anxious to finish the conversation and join Bertha, who was talking to the dapper little Hussar. He had completely forgotten Martin Wedekind's warning. "You and he are a pair when it comes to being as stubborn as a mule. And I'm not a mule skinner. Horses for mine. And so, just to oblige you, I'll . . ."

"You'll sell me the Yankee Doodle?" cut in the Baron, quickly, excitedly.

Too quickly. Too excitedly.

For Tom knew poker. At once, watching the other's features, he drew back a little. "Over anxious," he said to himself, and then, in a loud voice: "I'll let you know in the morning."

The Baron studied the Westerner's calm, clean-shaven face. He knew that it would be lost time to argue any more to-night.

"I'll be at your place at ten in the morning sharp. I have a spare horse and we'll take a little gallop together if you care."

"Fine and dandy! But—say!" Suddenly he remembered the riders he had seen cantering down the Kurfürstendamm from the windows of his apartment. "None of your measly postage stamp saddles. Either you get me a good old forty-pound stock saddle with a horn to swing my leg over when I get tired, or I'll ride that goat of yours barebacked, see?"

An hour later Tom was in his flat. Two hours

later he was sound asleep. Three hours later the jarring ring of the telephone bell startled him wide awake.

He rushed out and took down the receiver.

"What?" he asked. "Say that again! I shouldn't sell the Yankee Doodle Glory? Who's that talking? Who . . . ? Anonymous? Don't know a party by that name, but your voice sounds darned familiar. Oh—Anonymous isn't your name—you don't want to tell me your name . . . Oh! Look here, stranger, I don't cotton to that sort o' thing—if you got a square, decent reason for butting into my affairs, there isn't a reason in the world why you shouldn't tell me your name. Politics? Politics—hell! I mixed up considerable in politics when my boss ran for sheriff. What? German politics? Say, what do these Dutchmen know of politics? Eh? More than I think? . . . All right, all right! Keep your hair on, Mister Anonymous. Maybe I won't sell—yet!" and he went back to bed.

He did not know that in the servant's room, hidden in the clothes press, there was another telephone instrument connecting with his own, and that Krauss had taken down the receiver and had listened to every word of the conversation.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HORSEMAN

Tom's whole life, his whole philosophy, his whole decency, was a rough fact reduced to rough order. A simple man, he did not practice that maddening and useless mental stenography known to the elect as analytical psychology. He never dissected either his own or other people's emotions. Always had he believed that every question in life could, and should, be answered by a simple yes, or an as simple no; and once the answer, positive or negative, was given, it had to stand.

Thus, when he had gone back to bed that night, he felt disturbed in his equanimity.

For the anonymous telephone message had recalled to him Martin Wedekind's spoken and cabled warning not to sell the mine in the Hoodoos, and Martin was his good friend, had proved himself his good friend, besides being the father of the girl he loved.

On the other hand, he had led Baron von Götz-Wrede to believe that it was his intention to part with the property; and so here he was face to face with a moral dilemma which, to his simple, clean-cut conscience, threatened to assume very grave proportions.

He was, therefore, agreeably surprised when the next morning at precisely ten o'clock the German officer called on him and waved the whole perturbing question away with a negligent gesture of his gloved

hand. The man seemed neither astonished nor indignant.

"That's all right, Graves," he said. "Don't you worry about it the slightest bit. I'll make my peace with the Prince. I had rather an idea that—" and a less ingenuous mortal than Tom Graves might have noticed that at the words von Götz-Wrede gave a slight wink in the direction of the immaculate Krauss, who was busy with the breakfast dishes—"yes! I had rather an idea that you would change your mind. Why not? People are always liable to do that."

That last was a statement which jarred unpleasantly on the Westerner, since a change of mind was the very thing which clashed with his solid principles.

"But—but—" he stammered in a sort of flustered self-defense. He was going to give his reason for refusing to sell. But at once he remembered that Martin Wedekind's warning, whatever its cause, was sure to have been meant confidentially, while something—he did not know what, but it was very compelling—kept him from speaking of the anonymous telephone message.

"I—I . . ." He was silent.

"Never mind, never mind," smiled the officer. "Forget about it and slip into your riding togs. My man is downstairs with the horses and the brutes are a bit fretful this morning."

Then as the other, greatly relieved, turned to the door the German went on:

"By the way, people here ask me a raft of questions about my adventures in the wild West, and I forgot the name of that old partner of yours. Comical old chap with whiskers and an eternal plug of chewing tobacco bulging his right cheek."

"You mean Truex. 'Old Man' Truex. But he isn't my partner any more."

"He . . . Ah!" The Baron's well-modulated voice rose to a strangely high note, quickly changed into a cough. "Sorry. Must have caught cold last night." Again he coughed. "Did you buy him out, Graves?"

"You mean Truex?"

"Yes."

"Well, not exactly. We just signed a little agreement," and, led on by the other, who professed interest in American business methods as well as great admiration for American business shrewdness, he told what had happened between him and the old prospector.

"Bright chap, aren't you?" smiled the German. "All your own idea?"

"Lord, no! I'm a horse wrangler, not a money wrangler. It was Martin Wedekind who tipped me the wink."

"Oh—the Colonel's brother?"

"Sure!" and Tom added that Truex had gone once more into the wilderness, that he had left him control of the property, with the one stipulation that in the case of his death his sister, if ever she should turn up, or her children should inherit his share.

"Oh—Truex has a sister?"

"Has—or had. She ran away years ago with some foreign fiddler. 'Old Man' Truex don't know if she's alive, don't even know her married name."

"Very extraordinary, I'm sure," said the Baron. Then, for after all he was trained to the special game he was playing, he decided that even a man as blissfully ignorant of international intrigue as the young Westerner might suspect something if he overdid his

interest in the family affairs of the old prospector. So he asked Tom again to get into his riding things.

"All right. With you in a minute!"—and Tom went to his bedroom while the German, as soon as the door was closed, stepped up to Krauss and engaged him in a whispered conversation in explosive German.

Krauss bowed.

"Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann," he said. "I shall . . ."

Then, with a warning cough, he stepped quickly back and occupied himself once more with the breakfast dishes, for Tom was returning.

"Here I am—all cocked and primed!" he said, and Baron von Götz-Wrede stifled an involuntary exclamation of surprise.

For Tom, product of the West, loyal son of the West for better or for worse, was dressed as he would on the Killicott range—a sweat-stained stetson tilted over his brow, a clean, gray flannel shirt showing beneath his open threadbare coat that still bore tell-tale stains of Idaho alkali, a horse-hair quirt looped over his leather encircled wrist, and a pair of ancient, blue drill trousers tucked into high-heeled cowhide boots, stitched with an elaborate pattern and ornamented with a pair of heavy Mexican silver spurs.

The Baron was himself again in a moment. But he gave a silent prayer that not many of his comrades in the Uhlans of the Guard might use that particular Sunday morning to stroll or ride down the Kurfürstendamm towards Halensee and the Grunewald. He could imagine the jokes that would be made, with himself and his wild Western friend as targets, at regimental mess and *Liebesmahl.*

"All right," he said in rather a weak voice. "Let's

start." And a minute later they were in the street, on the earth-covered, bush-framed riding track that paralleled the sidewalk, where Tom, appreciating the fine points of the two bay mares with the quick, loving eye of the connoisseur, petted their soft noses and their coquettish, tufted ears with knowing hand. The Baron's *Bursche* looked on open-mouthed, wide-eyed.

But he opened mouth and eyes still wider when Tom bent and made as if to take off the saddle of his horse.

"What are you doing?" gasped the Baron, embarrassed, furious, for by this time a crowd of loiterers had assembled on the sidewalk, only restrained from jeering, jocular comment by the respected, admired, feared uniform.

Tom straightened up.

"Look here, Baron," he said; "I gave you fair warning I wasn't going to ride on any postage-stamp saddle. I want a stock saddle!"

"There wasn't any to be had in all Berlin for love or money."

"Well," laughed Tom, "that isn't my fault," and he slipped his hand underneath the horse's belly and loosened the cinch.

"What—whatever are you going to do?"

"Ride her as God made her!"

And off came the saddle with a scraping of waxed leather, a jingling of brass rings, and up vaulted Tom on the horse's bare back, sitting well down on his seat, legs hanging loose like an Indian's. He tickled the mare's ears with his quirt.

"Get up, you little beauty! Let's see how you can travel. *Yip-yip-yip!*" he yelled at the top of his lungs and he was off at a gallop while the Baron

mounted and followed, swearing under his breath.

Berlin was out in all its summer Sunday morning glory.

The women were there, trying to copy the fine feathers of Paris and Vienna, and the men trying to ape those of New York and London. The army was there in all its branches: Cuirassiers in cream and silver, Gardes du Corps in white and gold, crimson Hussars from Potsdam, brown Hussars from Elberfeld, black "Death Head" Hussars from Dantzig; Jägers in rifle green, gunners in sober dark blue, sappers and men of the Service Corps, all clanking their sabers truculently against the pavement, ogling the women, twirling their mustaches, sure, if not of themselves as individuals, then of themselves as a caste. A sprinkling of the navy was there, and a good deal of the nursery: in large white or black enamel perambulators wheeled by nurses from the old Slav colony near Berlin that is called the Spreewald, heavy women, in white corsages and aprons, pleated red skirts divulging massive ankles, with immense bonnets on their heads that spread right and left like the wings of airplanes, and talking their uncouth Wendish dialect.

The police was there, armed and panoplied and caparisoned like butchers with a penchant for homicide, and dozens of pimply faced schoolboys, in tight trousers and bowler hats, swinging canes like the grown-ups, aping their elders who, in their turn, like all good Germans, aped the British, and making archaic, sentimental love to stodgy little girls who looked up admiringly at the coming generation of the Blond Beast.

Tom rode his horse now at an easy hand gallop, the nearest approach to a lope of which the bay mare was

capable, and looked about him with wondering eyes. It was all so different from what he had expected. The Germany of which he had read, of which some homesick Germans in the West had told him, was a kindly land, a slow land, perhaps coated with a lot of sentimental sugar pap, yet a land which you loved, though at times it made you smile. He had also heard of another Germany, a Germany of simple, pure, naked strength, of stout walls built only for defense, of a kind of ancient, barbarous, Teutonic contempt for useless decorations, a land of bare stone, hard wood, brick floors. Yet here was this great boulevard—"we are proud of it," said Baron von Götz-Wrede. "It's the finest in the world. Fifth Avenue? The Lake Shore Drive? The Champs Elysées? Pshaw! They can't compare with it!"—and it was banal, baroque, overloaded, stuccoed, shallow; like some immense, second-rate watering-place, a cross between Chicago without the clouting strength of Chicago, and a Paris that was without its charm, that was entirely, shamelessly *cocotte*.

Of Paris smacked the open-air cafés that were on every block. They were filled to overflowing with the élite of the Berlin West end: *Assessoren,* junior judges, in all the crushing dignity of recently acquired sheepskin; students with droll flat caps, sky blue and pale green and hopeful lavender and virulent magenta, insignia of the *Corps* or *Burschenschaften,* the 'varsity fraternities, to which they belonged, their faces scarred and bloated, their paunches belying their youth; stout bankers' and brokers' wives filling in with pastry and heaped plates of strawberries and whipped cream the time between their "second" breakfast, which they had eaten an hour earlier and the two o'clock Sunday dinner; more officers and "One

Year Volunteers" of all the branches of the service; laughing Americans, and Englishmen and Scots smoking their short briars very much as in protest.

More passed down the street, talking stridently. Whole families out for their Sunday promenade, the *pater familias* in high hat and frock coat, the mother in a rustling silk gown clashing horribly with heavy boots and cashmere stockings, scolding the children. Russians there were in exaggeratedly modern clothes; a handsome Roman with the staring black eyes of his race, making the shameless love of his race to the blond, green-eyed Castilian woman who tripped by his side on high, red Cuban heels; a Chinaman from the Legation in embroidered peacock blue and looking with conscious imperturbability through his horn-rimmed spectacles; a Lutheran clergyman with curling white side-whiskers and a dusty bowler hat; a couple of "millionaire peasants" from Teltow, immense gold chains spanning their fat, peaked stomachs.

People on foot. People on horseback. Many in motor-cars of rakish shapes. A very few in carriages.

Berlin taking its swagger Sunday promenade in the year 1913, proud of itself, enormously certain of the fact that it was ahead of the rest of the world in art and civilization and culture!

Berlin a twelve-month before a mad Kaiser, helped by mad *Junkers,* mad professors, a mad army, a mad clergy, assaulted the decencies of the world . . . A year before the free world rose in self-defense and struck back at the crazed Beast!

Berlin, and warmth, and sunshine. Thousands walking and riding and driving.

And there were few who did not turn and look after the strange pair: the Baron in all the glory of his

regimentals, riding his mare very much like an English squire, and the Westerner, as free and careless as the plains whence he had come, his legs dangling loosely, without saddle, fanning his horse's steaming nostrils with his stetson and letting out war-whoops from time to time.

But few remarks were made. For the Baron wore the uniform, the King's Coat that demanded respect; and even Tom noticed it.

"Great little talisman, that mottled Joseph's coat of yours, Baron," he said; and the other replied in a matter-of-fact voice: "Of course. I'm an army officer, you know—and these chaps—civilians, what?" His lips went up in a contemptuous curl. The next moment he gave a cry of fear, of warning:

"Look out, Graves! For God's sake . . ."

An old lady, accompanied by a young girl, had tried to cross the riding track. She had fallen. The young girl stood above her, white faced, shielding the frail, prone form against the two mares that came on at a thundering, rushing gallop, frightened at the cries of warning and horror that rose from the people on the sidewalks.

Tom thought, weighed, measured, acted in the tenth part of a second.

The Baron's mare had taken the bit between her teeth; she was beyond control. And out flew Tom's left foot, kicking the Baron's horse with mule-like strength in the tender spot below the shoulder so that the brute swerved, snorting, slid, swerved again and passed to one side, barely grazing the old lady's bonnet.

At exactly the same instant, unable to stay his own horse or jerk it to one side, as the sharp kick had shifted his weight and balance, he leaned well for-

ward, gripping the horse's bare back with his knees. He clutched the mane.

"Up, you devil! Up, you beauty!"

And, adding his own strength, his own skill, to that of the mare, fairly lifting the animal bodily, he sent it at a long, splendid jump over and across the head of the young girl, not even touching her.

Twenty feet further he brought the mare to a stop. He jumped down and ran back. The girl had fainted.

He looked at her.

"Why, Bertha! Dear!" he stammered.

A moment later, she regained consciousness.

"How is grandmother?" she asked feebly; then she fainted again; and ready hands carried both her and old Mrs. Wedekind to a motor-car that had pulled up at the curb.

The German officer looked at Tom admiringly.

"Gad!" he said. "You *can* ride!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE OLD WOMAN SPEAKS

BERTHA left the room.

She had escaped without a scratch, and was off to dress for a dinner dance to be given that night by the bachelor officers of the Uhlans of the Guard, leaving her grandmother alone with Tom Graves, who had called, armed with a gigantic box of roses, violets, and orchids, to inquire after the health of the two ladies.

Old Mrs. Wedekind lay on the couch in her little boudoir furnished in a style different from the usual neo-German affair, crowded with ornaments that were no decorations, and with decorations that were no ornaments, with bulbous or angular monstrosities in wood or metal that were the fruit of some diseased artist brain from Berlin or Munich. The little octagonal, balconied room spoke of a former generation, both more gentle and more sophisticated. There was a simple rug of taupe and claret velvet, gray panelings of carved tulip wood, a lightly frivolous touch in the figures of women and tiny, paunchy cupids surrounded by love trophies which filled the angles of the cornices. There were some fine old enameled plates framed in dark green velvet, frail Tanagra statuettes and frailer tortoise-shell boxes; a mass of cushions covered with sumptuous Byzantine dalmatics, and a great Sèvres vase topped by a delicate, silvery spray of guelder roses.

Mrs. Wedekind was past eighty years of age and, besides Heinrich and Martin, she had given birth to four daughters all married to high ranking officials in the judiciary and all mothers of large families of their own. But she was still full of vitality, eagerly interested in what was going on in the world.

She smiled to herself as she lay there, studying Tom's open, boyish features with her shrewd, snapping old eyes that sparkled under bushy eyebrows, above which rose a high, wrinkled forehead negligently dusted with Rachel rice powder.

The daughter of a Westphalian nobleman, she had married Martin's father, a *Bürgerlicher,* a commoner, in the teeth of her family's aristocratic prejudices; and she still belonged to a former generation that had taken its cue from the best in Paris, that spoke French by preference, and German with a faintly French accent. The new Prussia rather bored her. To her it seemed too much flavored, as she expressed it, with kitchen, nursery, and sabers.

"New Prussia is frightfully bad form," she would say at times to her intimates, and even to her son Heinrich, who would invariably reply: "Yes, yes, *liebe Mutter,* but please keep your opinion to yourself. Don't forget . . ."

"I know," she would reply, with a malicious twinkle in her eyes, "you are in the army and my respected sons-in-law are *Beamten,* officials. And—honestly, Heinrich!—once in a while I forget that my father was a Baron von Sierstorpff, and then I feel a good deal of sympathy for the unwashed ruffians of the French revolution. Now that precious Emperor of yours . . ."

"Mother! Mother! You are speaking of the All-Gracious . . ."

"Fiddlesticks, Heinrich! The Barons of the house of Sierstorpff are a much older and a much better family than your Hohenzollern parvenus!"

In her youth she had been an enthusiastic horsewoman, riding both to stag and fox hounds, and she had told Tom how she admired his feat of that morning.

"You saved my life, young man," she said in her sharp, didactic old voice, and when Tom shook his head and mumbled something about it being not worth mentioning, she replied:

"I do not think my life is much to bother about either way. I am past the biblical limit—you see, as I am getting older, I try to believe in the Bible, so as to be on the safe side. But Bertha . . . There's a young life you saved . . ."

And then, quite suddenly, she looked straight at Tom Graves and went on:

"Young man, will you take the advice of an old woman who is not quite as blind as her children like to believe?"

"Sure." Tom was embarrassed.

"Very well, then. Leave Germany."

"Why, yes. I wasn't going to live here. I'm going back home, to Spokane."

"All right. Go. But don't dally. Leave just as soon as you can."

"But, Mrs. Wedekind!" Tom was both flustered and hurt. "I know I'm a free and easy sort of chap. I know that once in a while I say things I oughtn't, and do things that I . . ."

"It isn't that."

"Well—what is it?"

"Don't ask me for my reasons, young man. Do not quote me, either. I am telling you confidentially,

because I like you, and because you have saved my life and Bertha's. Yet, if you should quote me, I shall simply deny that I ever said a single word to you on the subject. But take my advice!"

"But—why?"

She sat up on her couch, her fine old eyes sparkling with intelligence and with a motherly sympathy for the young horse wrangler.

"Mr. Graves," she said, "you are an honest man, a simple man, a clean man. All considered virtues in your native West, I have no doubt, and virtues once in this Germany of mine. But to-day honesty and simplicity are at a discount in Berlin. They are considered morganatic virtues, virtues on the left hand, to be sneered at, to be meanly pitied, purposely misunderstood. A simple man, a man of fine, square, old-fashioned ideals—*ein echter Ehrenmann,* as we say, rather, used to say in Germany—has no business here!"

And she dismissed Tom, who for the first time in his life, knowing neither why he did it nor how, bent over a woman's hand and raised it respectfully to his lips.

CHAPTER XVIII

LORD VYVYAN SPEAKS

A WEEK later—and it was a week crowded with dinners and suppers and theater parties and dances, with the tawdry, hectic frivolities of Berlin At Night where Tom was usually the guest of Baron von Götz-Wrede, who was trying, he said, to repay a fraction of the splendid hospitality with which he had been treated in Spokane—old Mrs. Wedekind's warning was repeated.

Tom Graves had not seen very much of Lord Vyvyan during the last days. Nor was it his fault. He would have liked to introduce him into the gay set in which he was moving, had even suggested it to the Baron, who shrugged his expressive shoulders and said with a drawl, not a very cordial one, that of course any friend of Tom's was welcome. Tom noticed the lack of cordiality, but decided to overlook it, for, as he put it in a letter to Martin Wedekind: "Most of these young Prussian fellows seem to have been born with a sneer on their faces. I guess they can't help it. Must be merry hell to live in a country where every man you meet is either your superior or your inferior—never your equal!"

It was Lord Vyvyan's own fault that he had not seen more of Tom since coming to Berlin, and he explained that he was being kept frightfully busy at the Embassy; said he fancied "Old Titmouse"—that's how

he had nicknamed Sir Francis Bartlett, the ambassador —was deviling his soul to make him pay for the mess he had got into in Washington.

But, late one Saturday evening, having first made sure that the Westerner was at home, he called on him.

"Hullo, hullo, hullo!" he greeted him with his usual cheerful, slightly inane manner, sat down, and asked for a cigar.

Krauss, who hovered in the background, brought a box of panatellas, which the Englishman examined critically.

"Not your brand?" asked Tom.

"I know I am a tactless beast, Graves," replied Vyvyan. "But, you know, I must have one of those fat, pudgy little Bock havanas. Dined with the Titmouse, and the old boy fed me on greasy mutton and caper sauce. I need a havana, a Bock, to drive away the mutton grease, what?"

"I'm sorry," laughed Tom. "Panatellas is all I have in the house."

"Oh . . . Send out that man of yours. Here. I'll tell him where to buy them." And he told Krauss exactly where to go. "There's a little store just the other side of the Friedrich Strasse two doors from the corner of the Behren Strasse—on the south side. Ask for Boch claros, number four. Tell 'em they're for Lord Vyvyan of the British Embassy."

"But, Milord," suggested Krauss, bowing, "it will take me half an hour to get there and half an hour to return . . ."

"That's all right, Krauss. I'm always willing to wait for a pretty woman or a good smoke."

"But, Milord," the valet was evidently flustered. "I am sure I can get you the right sort of cigars at the corner store below!"

"No, no, no! I'm rather a bit fussy about my 'baccy."

"Sure," agreed Tom heartily. "I feel lost myself when I can't get Duke's Mixture and brown paper. Don't argue, Krauss. Get the cigars. A little fresh air will do you good."

Krauss left, and as soon as the outer door had closed, Vyvyan turned to Tom.

"Graves," he said, without the slightest preamble, "leave Berlin!"

"Gosh—there's that same old croaking again!"

"Again?" Vyvyan pounced on the word. "Did somebody else warn you?"

"You bet. Seems to me I'm considerable pumpkins here the way folks look after me."

"Who warned you?" insisted the other.

"Old Mrs. Wedekind, the Colonel's mother—and, believe me, she's a dear!" The words were out of his mouth before he thought. Too late he remembered that the old lady had asked him not to quote her.

Vyvyan looked very serious.

"Graves," he said, "that woman is a good friend of yours."

"Sure. I know."

"And, Graves," continued the Englishman, rather haltingly, being an Anglo-Saxon, thus wooden, flustered, easily embarrassed when giving voice to an emotion, "so am I—a good friend of yours!"

"You bet!" replied the Westerner, impulsively shaking the other's hand.

They were silent. They knew that they were good friends and that, though they had known each other only a fortnight or so, though no chance had risen through which to probe each other's heart and soul, they utterly trusted one another. Yet, immediately,

Tom felt that, in spite of it, there was to-night a slight barrier of reserve between him and the Englishman, and that it was of the latter's making. He felt it, and said nothing. For he knew how honorable a mutual reserve can be between friends, how it is the great, deep, sudden silences that are the real proof of friendship.

So he tried to change the conversation.

"I had a cable this morning from Spokane. A little annoying . . ."

"Never mind that," said the Englishman, returning to the first subject with the pertinacity of his race; and, suddenly assuming his habitual drawl and slang: "Graves, at times I am most frightfully bored with my jolly, pig-headed old ancestors."

"Are you?"

"Rather! They made such a damnable blunder when they gave you Colonial Yanks a chance to kick —and incidentally lick us. Hang it, old chap—you and I are of the same breed, the same blood, the same decencies, the same jolly old saving prejudices. There are some things you and I wouldn't do—simply because they aren't done. Well, I am not trying to gush. I'm not that sort. But—I wish you were an Englishman!"

"I don't!" screamed the eagle.

"Don't be a silly, bloody jackass! I didn't mean to offend you. But I wish—yes—I wish your nation and mine would stop talking of what happened over a hundred years ago. I wish Great Britain and America would talk together frankly, act together—*and* prevent together. I wish . . ." He caught himself. "Never mind. I'm not the Prime Minister and you're not the President. All I ask you is to get out of Germany."

"I won't."

"Why did you come here?"

"To—to . . . I told you on board ship."

"Right-oh!" said Vyvyan. "To keep your promise to that German Baron—and to get away from a girl."

"What of it?" asked Tom, a little belligerently.

"Oh—nothing much. Only, remember tellin' me about the cable Miss Wedekind received, begging her to hurry to Berlin, since her grandmother was about to kick the jolly old bucket?"

"Well?"

"Grandmother hasn't kicked the bucket yet! Grandmother is as hale as a four-year filly!"

"There was a mistake in the cable."

"Of course there was, Graves. That's what cables are for—German cables—to make mistakes, to forge words. That's how they bullied France into the War of Seventy—by making a little mistake in a telegram. I know." Again he caught himself and returned to the subject. "Graves," he continued, "mistake or no mistake—she received that message after you left Spokane—and she is here!"

"Yes, yes." The Westerner was getting irritated.

"Don't you think," went on Vyvyan very gravely, "that she was sent for—that she is being used, I mean, like—oh—a bait? Like a web, to keep you here?"

"Me!" Tom laughed. "Gosh! I'm not of enough importance."

"Not personally, perhaps. But there may be something you possess that is of importance."

"Hell! I've got nothing in the world except a sense of humor, good health—and the Yankee Doodle Glory mine!"

"Right." The Englishman jumped up. "Look here. I'll tell you . . ."

The next moment he was silent. He shook his head.

"Sorry, old chap," he continued. "Can't tell you. There was that silly old ass of a King George the Third who split your nation and mine. I made one mistake—in Washington—and I've learned my lesson. Only remember!" He stepped up close to his friend. "If ever you should get into trouble here in Berlin, if by any chance your American Ambassador should refuse to help you, or should be unable to help you . . ."

"Lord! I shan't get into any trouble. And why, if I did, should our Embassy refuse to help?"

"Purely hypothetical, old dear! But, given the double hypothesis—your trouble and your Ambassador's refusal or inability—remember that I work at the British Embassy, in the Wilhelm Strasse, three doors from Unter den Linden!"

"Unless," laughed Tom, "you yourself get into another row with your people and get chucked, as you did in Washington!"

"Right. Bright lad!" said the Englishman, but he was very serious. "There is always a possibility that I . . ."

He drew a ring from his pocket and asked Tom to examine it very thoroughly. Tom did. It was a simple affair of silver with the figure of a grayhound engraved on the round shield and above it the letters *B. E. D.*

"Know that ring now?" asked Vyvyan.

"Yes."

"Remember if you'd see it again?"

"Yes."

"Positive?"

"Yes, yes! Sure! Why?"

Vyvyan slipped the ring back in his pocket.

"Just this," he said. "If, I repeat, you should ever get into trouble and your Ambassador can't help you, if by that time I should have left Berlin, you must go to the British Embassy. Any time of the day or the night. Once inside the building you must use your own wits. You must find, somehow, without asking too many questions, the man who has the duplicate to this ring. Him you can trust. And nobody else. Also, forget what I told you to-night!"

Tom laughed. "Quite like an old-fashioned melodrama, with me as the villain, isn't it?"

"I hope you won't be the persecuted hero," smiled Vyvyan, and then, to turn the conversation: "You said something about a cable you got from Spokane?"

"Yes. Some mistake, I guess. Seems my old partner, Truex, died up North, in the British Columbia wilderness, about a week back, and a nephew of his turned up, son of that sister who ran away with the foreign fiddler. Seems he's trying to make a row. Says I swindled old Truex. That really Truex owned a controlling interest in the mine."

"What's the nephew's name?"

"Lehneke. Eberhardt Lehneke. Young German. Hasn't been over there very long, the cable says."

"Who sent you the cable?"

"Martin Wedekind."

"And what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to fight the young cub and lick him. I cabled straight back to Martin and to Alec Wynn, my lawyer. Just some darned hold-up game. But, believe me, I'll beat that young Mister Lehneke!"

"Gad!" said Vyvyan, with utter sincerity, "I hope

to God you will, Graves!" And he added, after a moment's thought: "Don't you think you'd better go back to Spokane and supervise the fight yourself?"

Tom shook his head.

"Vyvyan," he replied, "I'm not going to leave Berlin, happen what may, without . . ."

"Without?"

"Without Bertha! Bertha Wedekind!"

The Englishman was studying the pattern of the rug.

"Perhaps you are right," he murmured, half to himself.

CHAPTER XIX

THE VOICE OF BERLIN

Tom Graves loved Bertha Wedekind with all his fine, pure, close-fibered strength.

But he was no purblind fool.

Never having had much experience with women, his judgment was fresh and unclouded. He was free from the incubus of lying sensuality. Thus he recognized her faults; and he loved her none the less dearly.

And her greatest fault, rather her misfortune, was that at the most impressionable stage of her girlhood, she had come under the spell and glamour, for spell and glamour it was for all its harsh, mean tawdriness, of the Prussian military clique.

Her experience in life was nil. Her knowledge of history, civilization, and economics was the usual useless average, the usual useless hodge-podge of school text-books and romantic fiction.

Carefully hedged in by her Uncle Heinrich, by her uncle's friends, by the young officers and high officials she met, she was only allowed to see what was best in Berlin, and in a mistaken sweep of loyalty to her father's native land she compared it with what was worst in America. She gloried in the pomp and circumstance, enthusiasm shining in her clear young eyes when she walked down Unter den Linden with Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede or the little Hussar, when she

felt the respect and admiration with which the civilians regarded her martial companions.

Her former life in Spokane flashed up at such moments in sad, gray streaks of remembrance. At the time it had been pleasant enough, she thought, with the weekly hops at the Country Club, the horseback rides in the evenings across Hangman's Creek and out to Fort Wright, the quiet, simple, sunny summers spent at Hayden Lake or on the Killicott ranch, the plain-spoken, square-shouldered men, mining engineers, ranchers, merchants, lawyers, and young Canadian bank clerks from the local branch of the Bank of Montreal, who called each other Tom and Dick and Jack and Jim.

No! Back yonder there had been no romance, no glamour, no clanking of sabers, no clicking of heels, no kissing of hands, no whispering of: *"Gnädigstes Fräulein, Sie sehen ja ganz fabelhaft entzückend aus!"* no gay, challenging music of fife and drum.

Looking through the spectacles of her youthful imagination, she admired and loved this new Berlin which had sprung up, fungus-like, since the Franco-Prussian War, which had been built up with the money stolen from France. She was untrained in artistic judgment, and she admired the broad, sweeping streets framed by houses tumbled together of every style from peaked Gothic to ultra-modern *Sezession;* the department stores that tried to look like Florentine cathedrals and the churches that tried to look like department stores; the rococo palaces of the nouveaux riches decorated with meaningless stucco ornaments and monstrous caryatides supporting nothing in particular; the great public ballroom of the Behren Strasse, the Palais de Danse that endeavored to go Paris one better by using fifteen colors, clashing, cruel, hideous, where the

same French artist had used no more than three, perfectly blended.

Bertha was too young to understand the overemphatic, unæsthetic, bragging spirit of it all. She was caught in the whirl of gayety.

And there was gayety in the Berlin of the Autumn of the year Nineteen Hundred and Thirteen, nine months before the War. A future historian may some day call it the hysterical gayety that precedes the coming of madness.

Madness of too sudden success!

Madness of a nation, overfed, oversexed, cursed with national paranoia, intoxicated with the poisonous wine of self-glory!

Laughing, screaming, shouting madness that wound up in blood, and misery, and cruelties unspeakable—and punishment!

All that autumn Berlin danced. Berlin flirted. Berlin laughed. Berlin spent money like water. And the clique in the Wilhelm Strasse, the rulers of Germany, helped it along. They realized their own danger. They decided that there should be no national, wholesale awakening to the fact that the huge business colossus of modern Germany had feet of clay, a heart that was hollow, and empty pockets, that overspeculation had drained the imperial exchequer and that the most gigantic national failure and bankruptcy was imminent.

The exchequer must be filled. And there was but one way to do it:

Conquest! Conquest by the sword!

In the meantime, until the blow was struck, swiftly and successfully, the people of Germany must be kept in good humor.

On with the dance!—was the dictum of the Wilhelm

Strasse. Sing and drink and shout! Spend money! Buy, buy, buy!

On with the whirl of gayety! . . . Lest the people see the misery, the terrible threat of failure and bankruptcy that yawned at their feet like an abyss of Fate, lest they see beneath the pomp and circumstance of glittering uniforms and recognize the grinning skeletons . . . Like symbolic shapes!

Horribly expressive of something!

Suggestive of—what?

And in the midst of it all, with the best in the land, Bertha danced. Of course she saw a lot of Tom for the young Westerner went everywhere, was invited everywhere, and he, too, enjoyed himself. It amused him to meet Princes of the blood and aristocrats, who boasted twenty-four quarterings on their armorial shields. There was not the faintest shade of snobbishness in him. But the surface of his mood was exuberant. He felt an almost boyish delight, tempered with whimsical humor, in his growing power to comport himself correctly towards the élite of Berlin—and his correctness spelled simplicity, manliness, the natural, good-humored dignity of the free man of the plains.

As such he was accepted by the young officers and, if the truth be told, really liked.

Bertha, too, liked him, had always liked him, occasional tiffs apart, with unquestioning fondness. But rather with the sort of fondness one has for a beloved and thoroughly satisfying domestic animal.

But love? Real flesh-and-blood love?

"No, Tom," she said, a little sadly, when, one October evening, he had asked her for the tenth time that month to marry him and to return with him to Spokane. "I do not love you—and I shan't marry you."

"Still the same old reason, I guess?" he smiled.

"What ever do you mean, Tom?"

"Go on! You know well enough," he said rather brutally. "You wouldn't marry me even if you loved me . . ."

"Which I don't!"

"All right. But even if you did, you wouldn't marry me. Because . . ."

"Let's change the subject, Tom!"

"I won't! I repeat you won't marry me because I am not wearing one of those cute, pea-green monkey-jackets and because I don't drag three foot of pointed steel behind me."

"Well?" demanded Bertha belligerently, "suppose you are right? What are you going to do about it, Tom?"

"Do about it? Why! I am going to get me that monkey-jacket and that bit of steel. That's all!"

And Bertha would not have laughed had she known what had happened to Tom during the last couple of days.

CHAPTER XX

WHAT HAPPENED BACK HOME

BACK in Spokane, about a week earlier, lawyer Alec Wynn had paid a late call on Martin Wedekind.

"Well, Alec," asked the latter, anxiously, "how's it coming on?"

"Punk. Pretty damned punk. I am afraid that Tom Graves has not a leg to stand on."

"Oh, well, Alec, you're a lawyer, a professional pessimist. You're paid to look at the hopeless side of life, you know."

"No, Martin. It looks bad. Honest, it does! Have a peep at this!" He opened his leather case and took out a sheet of foolscap, sealed with the arms of the Dominion of Canada. "An affidavit, executed in regular form, attesting and swearing to 'Old Man' Truex's death. Signed by the coroner of Crow's Nest Pass, and by three witnesses!"

"Who are the witnesses? Let's see!"

Alec Wynn pointed at the scrawling signatures.

"John Good . . ."

"The fellow who keeps that ramshackle hotel and bar at the Crow's Nest?"

"Yes, Martin. The same."

"He's a bad actor. Used to be a cattle rustler in the old days before the Royal Northwestern cleaned up the land."

The lawyer inclined his head.

"Sure," he said. "I know. Good gives the lie eternal to his name. He's no good at all. Neither are the other witnesses. See here! Arthur Forsythe . . ."

"That shyster lawyer from Fernie, B. C.?"

"Right—and Lawrence Walsh."

"Who's he?"

"Chap from Berlin . . ."

"Berlin!" cut in Wedekind excitedly.

"Berlin, Ontario," laughed Wynn. "He isn't a German. Walsh. Irish name, that! Came to Western Canada about a year ago, and my brother Roy had some rather unpleasant business dealings with him."

"So it seems that all the three witnesses are a bit . . ."

"Off color?" asked the lawyer. "Sure enough. But the coroner believes them evidently. There's the cold-blooded legal fact. According to the regular Canadian records Truex is dead. Slipped off his horse, tumbled down a mountain-side, broke his neck, and was buried."

"Yes, yes!" Martin Wedekind rose and paced up and down the room. "And yet," he said, "somehow . . ."

"Somehow you don't believe that Truex is dead. Somehow you think the whole thing is a cooked-up game to cheat friend Graves!"

"Exactly!"

"But you can do nothing," continued Wynn, "unless you produce the old prospector in the flesh."

Wedekind stopped in front of the lawyer.

"Alec," he said, "I have reasons, good, sound reasons, for believing what I do believe—namely, that Truex is alive, that Lehneke—or the party Lehneke

acts for—is trying to do Tom out of the Yankee Doodle Glory."

"What are your reasons?"

"I can't tell you, Alec."

"I always thought you and I were pretty good friends."

"We are, Alec. But I can't tell you just the same. Only—don't give in. Fight—that!" bringing his fist down on the Canadian affidavit. "Get the body exhumed. Have a look at it."

"Impossible!"

"How so?"

"Impossible without long legal rigmaroles," the lawyer corrected himself. "They cost both time and money."

"I'll supply the money, Alec!"

"Yes, yes. But the time. Who in Hades is going to supply the time? You see, while you and I'd be getting ready to carry that affidavit mess into the Provincial Supreme Court, Lehneke has Tom by the short hair on his neck. Look at this!" And he flung a long, legal-looking document on the table.

"See?" he continued. "Statement sworn to by the German Consul-General in New York and declaring that Eberhardt Lehneke is the only son and heir of Paul Lehneke and Mary Lehneke, both deceased. Also statement by the same Consul-General swearing that he has on files in the consular archives a certificate of marriage contracted between Paul Lehneke and Mary Truex, only sister of 'Old Man' Truex, and daughter of John and Priscilla Truex, natives of Oswego, N. Y. And birth certificate of Mary Lehneke, née Truex—and half-a-dozen other papers, establishing young Lehneke's position as Truex's heir without the shadow of a doubt."

"But . . ."

"Wait! Here's still another paper to complete the sweet circle. Look. An injunction handed down this afternoon by the Supreme Court of the State of Washington, making it incumbent upon Tom Graves to give a complete accounting of ore taken, shipped and sold from the Yankee Doodle Glory mine, injuncting his further working of the mine until the case has been settled and turning over Tom's money in the Old National to a receiver until that same date. Not only that. Lehneke seems to be ace high back home in Germany. For they even got busy there and put their paws on Tom's money in the Deutsche Bank in Berlin. I tell you Graves is in a rotten bad hole, Martin!"

"Only for the time-being. I know that youngster. I tell you he'll fight harder than ever."

"I hope so. But meanwhile he's in Berlin, strapped to his last ducat, I reckon. What in thunder is the poor boy going to do?"

And exactly the same question was bothering Tom a few days before his interview with, and his tenth proposal that month to, Bertha.

"What am I going to do?" he asked himself, reading over Alec Wynn's lengthy, detailed cablegram; and then, with a smile, at another he had received that morning and in which Martin Wedekind offered to stake him to his ticket back to Spokane.

"Come straight home," Martin's cable wound up; *"up to you to fight."*

"I'll fight all right!" Tom's answer flashed back across the Atlantic and the North American continent. *"But I am not coming back just now;"* and it was just after he had sent Krauss to despatch the cable that

Lord Vyvyan called on him, immaculate in morning coat, topper, gray-cloth spats, and gold-topped malacca.

"Looking blue, Graves," he said. "What's the matter? Bad developments in your mining litigation?"

The Westerner showed him the telegrams without a word.

"Oh! I'm sorry! What are you going to do?"

Tom's jaws set like a steel trap.

"Fight!" he replied, laconically.

"Good!" exclaimed Vyvyan. "Jolly old spirit! Jolly old Anglo-Saxon quality! Fight! That's the ticket, old dear!"

Tom gave a rough laugh.

"I know. Only . . . at times I wonder if I'll be able to win."

"What?" The Englishman was horrified.

"Yep. It may be like—oh—like tackling this German army, with their Krupp guns and their trained millions, with our two-by-four American army. Damned stiff, Vyvyan! And . . ."

"Don't you dare say hopeless, Graves!"

"Sure. I won't. To please you. Only—" suddenly the whole despair of his situation surged upon the horse wrangler "—I've nothing left to fight with. They put their filthy, legal hands on everything I possess in the world, even the money I have in Berlin, at the Deutsche Bank. I don't know how I am going to pay for my dinner to-night, how I'm going to meet my rent. Yes. I've nothing left to fight with . . ."

"Except your friends!" cut in the Englishman. "You've got me!"

Tom smiled.

"Mighty kind of you, old fellow. I appreciate it, you just bet! But—not meaning to hurt your feelings none—how can *you* . . ."

"Shut up, and watch my smoke, Graves! What you got to have to fight that Lehneke person is the *nervus rerum,* money in other words . . ."

"That's no news!"

"And I'm going to supply it. I'm going to be the cute little bright-eyes who's going to plank down the war chest!"

"You?" Again Tom laughed. He remembered that the other had frequently told him how "stony" he was, that he did not have a cent in the world and had to depend on his brother, the Duke, for everything. "You—help me? Like the blind helping the lame!"

"Not at all. I have the makings, as you Americans say."

"Quit your bluffing. I know you're bust!"

"I am not!"

"You told me yourself that . . ."

"Old aunt of mine went out. Died, I mean. Left me oodles of cash."

"Oh!" Tom's exclamation was frankly incredulous; but Vyvyan slapped a check book on the table.

"Stop arguing and doubting," he said. "I'll write you my check now. As much as you want. Enough to fight that Lehneke person and to pay for all your living expenses here. Just name your figure," and, when Tom did not reply, only laughed, "how'll five thousand guineas do for a starter?"

"Five thousand guineas? That's twenty-five thousand dollars, isn't it?"

"Rather a little better, old cock. More if you want to. It'll be a pleasure."

"Must have left you a mint o' money, that aunt of yours."

"Right. Splendid old dear, wasn't she?" He waved the check book. "How much?"

But Tom shook his stubborn red head.

"I won't accept it," he said.

"Don't be a silly goat. You have got to win that case. You must give that Dutchman beans! Come on. Let me write you that check," urged Vyvyan.

"I'll think it over."

"All right, then. But I have to leave town for a few days, and so—here!" He made out his check for five thousand guineas on the British Linen Bank in London. "It's yours to use if you want to while I'm gone. Cash it at the American Express Company's local office."

"Wait," said Tom, "I must . . ."

"Receipt for it? Tommyrot!" And the Englishman was out of the room and the flat.

Tom looked at the check.

"Mighty convenient aunt, that one of Vyvyan's," he said to himself, "and died at a mighty convenient time. Well . . ."

He heard a faint noise behind him and turned. Krauss was standing there. His eyes were glued on the slip of pink paper and, acting quite instinctively, Tom put it in his pocket.

"Sent off that cable?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Well?"

"Baron von Götz-Wrede is calling."

"All right. Show him in," said Tom; and a moment later the officer came into the room.

"Has Vyvyan been with you again?" were his first words. "I just met him on the stairs."

"Yes," replied Tom.

"Do you like that drawling, supercilious Britisher?"

"Sure." Then, quickly, suddenly, Tom's temper got the best of him. "Look here," he added, belligerently, "I don't think it's anybody's damned business with whom I choose to herd, see?"

"That's where you are wrong, Graves. It is my business—as your friend!"

"Tickled to death you call yourself my friend. But—Vyvyan's my friend, too, and . . ."

"Let me explain!"

"All right, all right."

"Vyvyan is an Englishman."

"What of that? What's wrong with Englishmen?"

"Wrong? Oh . . . Nothing . . ."

The man was silent. He was very quiet, a smile playing on his handsome, dark features.

Then, with a terrible suddenness, a change came over him. His eyes flashed fire. His flaring nostrils dilated and quivered like those of a thoroughbred stallion. He shot out his long, strong, hairy hands, gesticulating, like clutching at an invisible, hated object. His heart, his soul, his whole being seemed to acetify, and all his well-trained, well-subdued emotions danced away in a mad whirligig of passion.

"I tell you what's wrong with them!" he cried, his voice peaking up to a high, broken screech. "These English—these hypocritical, supercilious tradespeople —*dieses verdammte Krämervolk!* . . . Why, Graves . . . Wherever you go, wherever you turn, Africa, America, Asia, the South Seas, you find them squatting in their damned, smug self-content! Their flag is everywhere, their ships, their drawling, monocled fools of younger sons, their prating clergy, their contemptible little, scarlet-coated army . . . They are everywhere . . ."

"Sure," laughed Tom, "they are everywhere. And

don't they do things right wherever they are? Don't they govern well? Don't they give all the world, including you Dutchmen, a fair chance to trade on equal terms and make money wherever they are? Say, I don't know much about politics, but just judging from what I know of horses, I reckon you're jealous . . ."

"I, a German, jealous of an Englishman?"

"You bet your boots. You're as jealous as hell. Otherwise you wouldn't curse them as you are doing now and the next moment try to ape them."

"We're not aping them!"

"Sure you are. I got eyes to see. There isn't a man in this town who can afford to who don't turn up his breeches when it rains in London. Look at the names of your swell stores: *Old England, Prince of Wales, London House*—and your hotels: the *Bristol,* the *Windsor,* the *Westminster.* Why, man, I've seen you ride. And you yourself try your darnedest to ride like a Britisher!"

"I don't have to try! I do ride like them. I went to the London horse show, at Olympia, and . . ."

Tom burst out laughing.

"Bit, didn't you?" he asked. "Caught you with the goods, eh? Been to London and learned the trick! Sure. That's just what I am saying . . ."

And when the Baron worked himself into another storm of passion, speaking about *"dieser gemeine Englische Pöbel,"* Tom cut in with an impatient:

"Forget it. You talk like an old-fashioned Cleveland Democrat on the stump. What's the use? You aren't running for Congress, and I'm not Irish. The days when you had to tweak the lion's tail to cop a hatful of votes are gone. We're sane these days."

"You mean to say that you Americans are satisfied to sit still while the English . . ."

"Yep. We're satisfied with our own little block of real estate—from the Lakes to the Gulf, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. We aren't hogs. We got plenty and we don't envy our British cousins."

The German looked at Tom. There was an expression of utter astonishment on his aquiline face. Then he laughed.

"Ever heard of Nietzsche?" he inquired.

"No. What is it? Sounds like a guy sneezing."

"Nietzsche was a writer," the German went on, "and he wrote a book called *Zarathustra.* In that book there is a passage which speaks of the Ear, big as a man, on a slender stalk, and against the stalks dangles a bloated soul—shallow, untrained, helpless. And that soul, my friend, is the Anglo-Saxon world!"

"Nutty! Ab-so-lutely, completely hickory!" was Tom's simple comment; and to wind up the argument, he added: "Anyway, Vyvyan is a pal o' mine. Sit down. You look all excited. I'm going to get you a drop of my private stock Bourbon."

He walked out of the room. On the threshold he brushed against Krauss, who was just coming in, and he did not notice that the valet's nimble fingers had rapidly dipped into his side pocket to come out with a slip of pink paper.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TIGHTENING OF THE WEB

"KRAUSS," said Baron von Götz-Wrede while Tom was out of the room, and examining Lord Vyvyan's five-thousand-guinea check, "you have done well. I shall speak of you to . . . You know . . ."

"Thank you, sir."

The officer gave him back the check, and the valet was about to tear it up when the other stopped him.

"No, no! What are you doing, man?"

"I thought, sir, I would . . ."

"Heavens, no! Put it back in Graves' pocket. Better still, drop it on the floor—over there—near the little taboret."

"Zu Befehl, Herr Hauptmann!" Krauss clicked his heels. The check fluttered on the rug.

"That's right. No use having Graves suspect. He's deliciously simple, our American friend. But still . . ."

"Any other orders, *Herr Hauptmann?*"

"No, Krauss. You stay with Graves."

"But—I beg your pardon, sir—if he has lost his money . . ."

"Not exactly lost yet, worse luck! Lehneke is doing splendidly. So are the others. But the case is not yet finally decided."

"But . . ." Krauss cut in again, anxiously; and the Baron smiled condescendingly.

"Krauss," he asked, "have you ever known our branch of the service to make a mistake?"

"No, *Herr Hauptmann!*"

"You have worked for the service in America, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir. Also in England, and in France."

"Very well. You know the ropes. You know that we are never caught napping. We are armed against all contingencies. The army? The navy? To be sure. They will do their share when the day comes . . ."

"Yes," whispered Krauss, "the day—*der Tag!*"

"But," continued the other, "we—our branch—are the real people! Our names are unknown. We get little thanks. But we are the heart of Germany. We have the will, the brains, the clear-cut, cold efficiency. Thus in the case of this delightfully simple young American. He will . . . Ah!" as Tom came back with a bottle and two glasses, "Thanks! I need a drink."

"Say when," smiled Tom, pouring.

"That's plenty." Von Götz-Wrede raised his glass. "Fill yours, Graves."

"Sure. Never refused one yet."

"All right. And now—let me give you a toast!"

"Fire away!"

The Baron threw back his shoulders. His heels came together sharply. He spoke in a ringing, metallic voice:

"I drink to the newest officer in the invincible army of our All-Gracious Sovereign Wilhelm the Second, King of Prussia, Emperor of the Germans! I drink to Lieutenant Tom Graves of the Uhlans of the Guard!"

Tom put down his glass.

"Say!" he inquired. "What's biting you? What sort o' hop have you been hitting? What's the big joke?"

"Joke? There's no joke!"

The Baron walked up to him and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Tom," he said in low, earnest accents, "be one of us! Put on the blue and crimson of the Uhlans of the Guard! Ride with us! Drink with us! Tilt lances with us! Laugh with us! And—if such be God's will—fight with us!"

"But—but . . ." Tom was utterly dumbfounded.

"There are no Buts. We like you. We want you. Come! Be our comrade in arms!"

"But"—stammered Tom—"I know nothing about the army. I know nothing about . . ."

"You can ride, man! There's no better horseman in Germany than you. Why, how can you say no? You are young and healthy. Can't you feel the glory of it, the zest, the splendor of it? A soldier's life? A cavalryman! A dashing Uhlan!"

For a moment he was silent. He tossed down the whiskey.

Then he continued in an epic abandon, and deep down in his heart he was sincere:

"The army, Tom! The cavalry! The right life for a man like you, a man of the plains, a man on horseback!"

From the distance, drifting up from the Kurfürstendamm, came the many sounds of a brigade marching out to maneuver. Brasses and fifes and drums brayed and shrieked and thumped their separate notes, blending with the hollow tramp-tramp-tramp of drilled feet, the low, dramatic rumbling of the guns, the

neighing of horses, the scraping of lance butt and sword scabbard on saddles.

The Baron threw open the window.

"The army!" he went on. "God, man, *can't* you feel it? Doesn't it give you a thrill? The tightened reins! The call of the trumpets! The thunder of the hoofs! And—if war should come—the shock against the enemy's phalanx, the curses and the slashings, the sudden numbness of the sword arm when the steel strikes horse or rider! Empty saddles! Dust! Blades that cross and slash and flicker! And then the reeling victor's fist! Then the waving of the enemy's captured pennant! Oh, the triumph, the glorious, glorious triumph of it!"

He paused. He gripped Tom's hands.

"Come! Be one of us!" he added in a tense whisper.

The young Westerner had been steadily thinking, and the more he thought, the more fascinating seemed the Baron's proposal.

It was not only the glamour of the army which captured his imagination. He did think of it. Assuredly. For he was young and eager.

Also there was his dry American sense of humor. What a lark it would be! He, Tom Graves, horse wrangler, in the blue and crimson of Prussia's crack Uhlan regiment. Gosh! Martin Wedekind and Alec Wynn and Newson Garrett and all the other fellows back home would open their eyes some!

Herr Leutnant Tom Graves!

It was a scream!

Not only that. For there was Bertha. She was always speaking about the army, the officers, the gorgeous uniforms. Well—he studied himself compla-

cently in the mirror which hung between the windows—he'd look all right in blue and crimson, with gold epaulettes, and a trailing, clanking, crooked cavalry saber.

And finally it would solve his financial difficulties. He would draw regular pay and save enough to fight the Yankee Doodle Glory litigation.

So there was no reason in the world why he should say no. There was every reason why he should say yes.

And he did say yes!

"Fine and dandy!" he cried enthusiastically. "I am with you! You just bet your boots I am with you!"

Then he had a sobering thought.

"Say, Baron," he went on, "are you sure the thing can be fixed?"

"Of course. I have already talked to Prince Ludwig Karl. We are anxious, very anxious, to have you in the army!"

And Krauss, who was standing in the doorway, smiled. He said to himself that there at least the Baron had spoken the unvarnished truth.

CHAPTER XXII

HERR LEUTNANT GRAVES

After Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede had left Tom found Vyvyan's check where Krauss had dropped it. He had not missed it before. He picked it up and, deciding that he would not need it now his immediate future was assured, was about to tear it up when there was a ring at the front door bell.

He had sent the valet out to get him some cigarettes, and so he went to the door himself to admit a telegraph messenger.

He tipped him and opened the crinkly, manila envelope.

"Gosh," he said, "it's raining cables to-day!"

He read. Then he gave a low whistle.

"Bully, Alec! Bully for you!"

He paused and looked at Lord Vyvyan's check.

"Damned lucky I didn't tear you up, you little rosy-cheeked beauty. You'll come in mighty handy!"

For in a lengthy missive, regardless of expense, lawyer Wynn had cabled that through a sudden change there was now a first-rate chance for Tom to win the Yankee Doodle Glory case, but that he must remit at once a stiff sum of money, say five thousand dollars. Wynn added that he would have asked Martin Wedekind for the amount, but the latter was out of town. And he himself was strapped.

So Tom decided that he would use five thousand dollars of Lord Vyvyan's check, give him back the

remaining twenty thousand, and repay the balance just as soon as the case was settled.

He walked down the stairs and whistled for a taxi.

"American Express Company!" he said, speaking in German. He had been making steady and conscientious progress in the mastering of the language. "Mohren Strasse corner of Friedrich! *Rasch!*"—and twenty minutes later he was leaning across the oak counter of the local branch of the American Express Company and explained matters to the little, black-haired Welshman who presided over the cashier's cage.

"To be sure!" said the Welshman. "We know Lord Vyvyan. We always honor his checks."

"Always?" asked Tom, intrigued. "I thought his aunt only died the other day."

"Beg pardon, sir," replied the diplomatic, suspicious cashier. "I know nothing about his Lordship's deceased aunt. But the check is all right. What? Yes, sir, I shall make the cable transfer."

He figured for a few minutes, asked Tom to sign some papers, and gave him the rest of the money in German bills.

"Don't mention it, sir. Thank you, sir."

Tom dismissed the waiting taxicab.

"I'll walk," he said, and he struck out at a good clip down the Leipziger Strasse, across the Potsdamer Platz, towards the Westend.

The Berlin streets lay in the embrace of a golden afternoon of late autumn, the pale sun still warm with the glory of harvest, with no foretaste of winter tang and winter sadness. The roofs of the great, braggart department stores took on beauty for the time-being, glittering in every shade of green and blue and purple, like the plumage of some gigantic

peacock. The oak and beech trees bordering the Spree dipped to the water in a rustling, shimmering rain of yellow and crimson leaves; the spotless windows of the many shops mirrored the cloudless evening sky with a myriad rainbow facets; and even the ugly, pompous statues that rose from every square, were relieved with delicate sprays of color that touched them with the gentle, mellowing hands of romance.

The streets were filled with people. Workmen in brick-powdered clothes went past, smoking cheap cigars. dinner pails swinging from their arms, discussing with loud voices the last editorial in the *Vorwärts*. Stalwart nurses wheeled their charges home from the Tiergarten. Merchants and bankers purred along in great motor-cars to join their families in an open-air supper at the Zoölogical Gardens. Back of the tennis court to the left of the Charlottenburg depot, on a rough plat of ground, some high schoolboys were playing football, not cleverly, but with a certain lusty Teutonic zest, filling the air with riotous shouts.

Tom stepped amongst aristocrat and burgess and student like a conqueror. His thoughts were with Bertha—and the blue-and-crimson uniform of the Uhlans. For, although there seemed a first-rate chance now of his winning the Yankee Doodle litigation, he had made up his mind nevertheless to accept the Baron's proposal.

It would be such bully fun. And—there *was* Bertha!

He grinned good-naturedly as he was bumped into by two arrogant "One Year Volunteer" privates of the *Maikäfer* regiment of grenadiers.

"Wait, my lads!" he thought. "Just wait till I get my uniform—my little monkey-jacket and my

pointed roasting spit! I'll make you toe the mark. I'll teach you how to bump into people!"

And, stopping at the Gross Berlin American Bar, where a morose, nostalgic ex-Coney Island barkeeper was earning his living by introducing the gilded youth of Berlin West to the mysteries and delights of trans-Atlantic mixed drinks, he very much astonished that worthy by waving a lofty hand when the man addressed him as: "Hullo, Tom, you old son-of-a-gun! Have one on the house!" and by asking him, in mock dramatic accents, to call him in the future: *"Herr Leutnant!"*

"Say! Wot's eatin' o' you?" asked McCaffrey, the barkeeper, to receive the mystifying reply, pronounced in the horse wrangler's best German:

"Rechts um! Kehrt! Präsentirt das Gewehr! Marsch! Marsch!"

"What d'ye think ye are?" demanded the aggrieved McCaffrey. "A gol-dinged Prooshan lootinant?"

"Right!" snarled Tom, trying his best to copy Colonel Heinrich Wedekind's martial accents. *"Hoch der Kaiser!"*—and he swaggered out of the bar while McCaffrey looked after him in speechless astonishment.

When Tom reached his flat, he found it filled by a jolly company.

Baron von Götz-Wrede was there, accompanied by Colonel Wedekind, the little Hussar whose name was Graf von Bissingen-Trotzow, the wizened professor with the tiny, red ears, whom he had met that first night at the Colonel's house, and half-a-dozen other officers in glittering regimentals.

They greeted him with jokes and laughter and enthusiasm:

"Guten Abend, Herr Kamerad!"

"Ist ja ganz famos, Herr Kamerad!"
"Grossartig, Herr Kamerad!"
"Herr Kamerad!"
"Herr Kamerad!"—and, again:
"Herr Kamerad!"

They shook his hands. They congratulated him, themselves, the army, and Germany, until the Colonel enjoined silence.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen, if you please!"

He turned to Tom and wished him luck in a few well-chosen words, both in his own name and that of the regiment.

"Thanks!" smiled the Westerner. "But I'm not in the regiment yet. I guess there are some formalities."

"Everything is arranged. You will receive your commission to-night, Mr. Graves."

"To-night? Gee whizz! That's darned quick work!"

"Isn't it?" replied the Colonel. "But Prince Ludwig Karl spoke a word in your behalf. To-night you will be presented to His All-Gracious Majesty, *der Kriegsherr!* To him personally you will give the oath of fealty. Hurry into your dress clothes, my dear sir. The audience with His All-Gracious Majesty will be in an hour!"

Krauss helped Tom change, and ten minutes later he was sitting by the side of the Colonel in the latter's motor-car. They drove through the Brandenburger Thor, where the sentinels on duty jumped out, presenting arms. The Colonel saluted. Tom waved a negligent hand.

Up to the Alte Schloss they drove, where Tom was taken in tow by a chamberlain in silken, black knee-breeches, who led him through a long suite of rooms, all furnished rather dingily in the style of two gen-

erations ago, and into an antechamber where he was received by Prince Ludwig Karl.

The latter said something about: *"Charmirt, mein Herr, ganz charmirt!"* and preceded Tom into a large, octagonal salon.

Near the balconied window, sitting stiffly erect on a hard chair, was a short, oldish man in the full uniform of a field marshal, his chest blazing with German and foreign decorations.

"His Majesty!" mumbled Prince Ludwig Karl, and Tom looked curiously at the Prussian War Lord.

He beheld a lean, yellow, dissatisfied, rather morose face, with large ears, and sagging lips brushed by an upsweep of gray, martial mustache. With his bloodshot, roving eyes, his haggard cheeks, his high, wrinkled forehead, he seemed to Tom like an old, weary bloodhound.

The ceremony itself took little time. Tom bowed and repeating word for word the oath of fealty, by the terms of which, only half knowing what he was saying, he bound himself to serve His All-Gracious Majesty in peace and war, and to obey all orders, then shook the Emperor's limp, hairy hand, and was ushered out of the salon and the palace.

The Colonel was waiting outside.

"To-morrow I'll take you to my tailor to have you measured for your uniform, Lieutenant Graves," he said.

And it was thus that, the next day, to Bertha's belligerent question of what he was going to do about it, he replied that he was going to get himself the monkey-jacket and the bit of steel.

In fact, both had already been ordered from "Paul Hoffman & Cie, Hoflieferanten, Purveyors to His Majesty the King of Spain and His Majesty the King

of Sweden, *Militäreffektenlieferanten*" . . . The latter a jaw-breaking noun which even Tom, in spite of his rapidly improving German, could not translate as "army tailors" without the help of the dictionary.

CHAPTER XXIII

TRUEX

On the afternoon of the day on which Alec Wynn had sent his first, rather hopeless, cable to Tom—the cable which within forty-eight hours of its arrival in Berlin was destined to precipitate the young Westerner head over heels into the iron web of the German army —the lawyer entered his office in the Mohawk Block to find there waiting for him a half-breed French Canadian by the name of Baptiste Lamoureux, whom he knew, unfavorably, from former occasions. He had defended him more than once in the local courts for minor offenses as well as for a couple of shooting scrapes, and so Wynn's greeting was appropriate:

"Hello, Batis'! Going to croak somebody and coming to me in advance to arrange for the proper alibi?"

The Canadian laughed with a flash of even, white teeth.

"No, M'sieu!" he replied. "M'sieu, I am a frien' of yours!"

"Purely disinterested, I reckon." By birth the lawyer was a Southerner and all the years spent in the Northwest had not been sufficient to make him drop his North Carolinian phraseology.

"Alas, no, M'sieu! Disinterested? Ah! One must eat an' sleep, *hein?*"

"Surely — and get one's nose full on occasion. Batis', I appreciate your charming personality, but I

am a busy man. Close the door on the outside. I have no time for either social intercourse or the swapping of philosophical observations."

"Sure Mike. But—ah"—Lamoureux winked rapidly one little beady black eye—"you would have time if I whisper to you one, one tiny leetle word as to M'sieu 'Old Man' Truex. That no so, M'sieu?"

The lawyer dropped his forensic calm. He jumped up and took the other by the shoulder.

"Come through! What is it?"

"The information costs money. I tol' you, M'sieu, *un pauv' type comme moi* . . . I must eat an' sleep an', as you say, occasionally get my nostrils full of whiskey *blanc!*"

"How much, you damned rascal?"

"M'sieu! M'sieu!" exclaimed the other. "You must not misunderstand me. It is not for me, the money. I—I am your frien'. Also am I a frien' of M'sieu Graves. Once he help' me an' I do not forget."

"Well? Who wants the money then? Speak out, man!"

Followed a long, tense, whispered conversation, the lawyer making objection after objection, asking question after question, all satisfactorily answered by the Canadian.

Finally Wynn inclined his head. The man's story seemed very convincing. If it was the truth, Tom was sure to win the case.

"You are speaking the truth, Lamoureux?" he asked, glaring at the other with his piercing blue eyes.

"Yes, yes, M'sieu! I swear it by the dear Virgin!"

"All right. Wait."

Came a frantic telephone call to Martin Wedekind, whom he had left only an hour earlier.

"Martin has gone out of town," Mrs. Wedekind said across the wires.

"Where to? I must communicate with him!"

"I am sorry. He has taken the motor and his fishing-tackle—and you know he keeps his trout streams a dead secret . . ."

"That's so. No reaching him, I reckon. All right. Thank you just the same, Mrs. Wedekind."

And then the second cable to Tom Graves, who acknowledged it, before the evening was out, by telegraphing five thousand dollars through the American Express Company in Berlin to the lawyer's account with the Merchants' and Traders' Bank.

"Quick work!" said Wynn, cashed the money, rushed to the Spokane & Northern Railroad Depot and took the next train for Nelson, B. C., accompanied by Lamoureux.

Back in Berlin, Tom was very busy considering the duties and pleasures of his new situation in life.

"You'll catch up to all that drill stuff quick enough," Baron von Götz-Wrede told him. "Saber and lance you'll learn in no time . . ."

"Shooting and riding I know. I'm a pippin at it if I say it myself."

"Rather. And as to the rest, you'll learn the ropes very quickly. You'll make a first-rate cavalryman." He slapped Tom on the shoulder.

"Tickled to death you think so."

"I know it. Of course," the German continued, lighting a cigar, "there's the social life to be considered. You know the military keeps itself aloof from the civilians. We have our own clique, our own interests, our own etiquette, our own catchwords even."

"Sure. I know."

"But perhaps you don't know that there is a great

deal of difference between the Guard regiments and those of the Line. Our regiment belongs to the Guard."

"Well?"

"An officer in a Line regiment can live on his pay. We of the Guard cannot. We have all sorts of unwritten laws, unwritten obligations, unwritten duties. We pay for the regimental band. We all have to keep a string of horses. We entertain a frightful lot. All very expensive, very expensive. In fact—at all events in the Uhlans—a chap must have at the very least sixty thousand marks a year private income—that's fifteen thousand dollars in your money, Graves."

"That's all right, sonny," said Tom.

The German looked up, studying the other's open, boyish features intently.

All morning he had spent at a certain office in the Tauentzien Strasse near Jensen's department store, which was labeled innocuously *"Imperial German Ethnological Survey Bureau,"* where large steel filing cabinets were locked nightly behind double steel doors, and where men seldom spoke above a whisper.

There he had studied certain reports, two of which had come by cable from America, the third by telegraph from England, and all in cipher code.

The first cable was signed by Ethnological Survey Operator Lawrence Walsh, *alias* Grant Stickley, *alias* Jacques Mersereau, drawing his pay as simply Number 789, a former resident of Berlin, Ontario, and at present stationed at Fernie, B. C. According to him the case of Eberhardt Lehneke *versus* Tom Graves, while not yet completely settled, was nearly certain to be decided in the former's favor. He added that Mr. Alec Wynn, counsel for the defense, seemed to consider the case hopeless since he had left town, accom-

panied by a French-Canadian Indian guide by the name of Baptiste Lamoureux, to hunt mountain sheep in the vicinity of Nelson, B. C.

The second cable, by the same Lawrence Walsh, had arrived that morning and was a trifle less enthusiastic. It said that Mr. Alec Wynn had suddenly returned from British Columbia and, immediately upon his return, had had a long conversation with Mr. Jonathan Small, Prosecuting Attorney of Spokane County. Mr. Wynn had seemed to be in very good humor after he had left the Prosecuting Attorney's office, but although he, Walsh, Number 789, had gone through the lawyer's files, correspondence, desk, trunks, and clothes with minutest care, he had not been able to find out anything whatsoever. Nor had Mr. Wynn made any attempt to lift the injunction on Mr. Graves' property. It was the respectful opinion of Number 789 that Mr. Wynn was practicing that great American game called Bluff.

The third message, the telegram from London, had been sent by a certain Kurt Blumenthal, son of Israel Blumenthal, the great Hamburg banker, and clerk, thanks to the influence of his father, in the London office of the British Linen Bank. Modestly calling himself Number 554, he reported that the check for five thousand guineas drawn by Lord Vyvyan in favor of Mr. Tom Graves, about which he had been requested to give information, had *not* been cashed or presented for payment. Neither in the London office of the bank nor in any of the provincial branches.

Here, then, was the situation, and it was a little puzzling:

Mr. Wynn, in Spokane, seemed of cheerful mien, but had brought no action to annul the injunction. Tom was evidently not hard up in spite of the fact that

he had not yet cashed Lord Vyvyan's check, for Baron von Götz-Wrede did not know that the check, cashed in the Berlin office of the American Express Company, had passed through intricate and peculiar channels. A fair-haired, innocent-looking Englishman had erased its entry in the ledger of the Express Company, had forwarded it to another fair-haired, innocent-looking Englishman in the London British Linen Bank who, seeing a minute *B. E. D.* written in the upper left hand corner, had taken it direct to a house in Whitehall Street. There a patriarchal, white-haired, blue-eyed gentleman had paid it in crinkling Bank of England notes and had torn it into shreds, afterwards carefully burning them to flaky ashes.

Yes. The thing puzzled the Baron. On the one hand there was the report of Number 789, on the other that of Number 554.

Thirdly, there was Tom's cheerful smile, his cheerful admission, when told that he had to have a large private income, that he knew it.

Thus the Baron decided to make assurance doubly sure. It might mean money thrown out of the window. But the *"Imperial German Ethnological Survey Bureau"* resembled the office in Whitehall Street in so far that it kept no record of monies received or spent.

"Tom," he said, "are you sure you're all right? I mean—about that private income?"

"Don't you bother," laughed the Westerner, who had complete confidence in Alec Wynn and who knew that the latter would not have asked him to cable the money unless he had a first-rate chance of winning the litigation. "I'm as right as rain."

"You are—positive?"

"Yep."

"But—" the German was momentarily nonplussed.

He wondered if the "deliciously simple" American was less innocent than he seemed. He decided to put one of his cards on the table, face up. "I say," he went on, "I read something in the papers about a litigation against the Yankee Doodle Glory . . ."

"Sure. That's right. But I guess I'll win it with flying colors."

"I hope you will. In the meantime . . . well . . . I am still willing to buy the mine."

"Not on your life," replied the horse wrangler. "If my title to the Yankee Doodle is punk and I lose the case, I'd hate like the devil to see you stuck. And if my title's all right I don't want to sell. That's pretty darned square logic, isn't it?"

And the Baron had to admit that it was.

CHAPTER XXIV

ALL DRESSED UP

Tom Graves wanted to surprise Bertha Wedekind with his new rank and station, and so he had sworn the Colonel, the Baron, and his other friends amongst the officers of Bertha's acquaintance to secrecy.

Monday morning, shortly after ten, Paul Hoffmann & Cie, *Militäreffektenlieferanten,* delivered his uniform and full accouterments, and an hour later he was on the street in all his pristine, blue-and-crimson glory and, if the truth be told, feeling not the slightest bit self-conscious. He had been excused from active duty for the rest of the week and was entirely his own master.

In front of the house he met Kurt Meissner, the irascible banker who had the apartment below. The man stared, open-eyed, open-mouthed. Tom grinned, saluted, and went on his way.

He was in splendid humor. The tip of his sword scabbard bumped behind him on the granite pavement. He liked the sound of it. He felt like on that morning before he had won the broncho busting medal at the Pendleton roundup: quite sure of himself, but without the least conceit.

He turned down the Kurfürstendamm, and his first stop was at the "Gross Berlin American Bar."

Even at that early hour the place was fairly well

filled. There were a few sporting German men-about-town talking to each other in English, very proud of their London cut tweeds, and trying not to make wry faces as the American cocktails trickled down their beer-trained throats. There was furthermore a sprinkling of Americans and Englishmen; most of them boxing and roller skates instructors, and jockeys and trainers attached to the great racing establishments of such German plutocrats as Baron von Oppenheim, Prince Salm-Horstmar, and Freiherr von Matuschka-Greiffenklau, the Silesian "coal baron."

All the habitués of the bar knew Tom Graves. He had bought them many a drink since he had come to Berlin, had helped out more than one of the Anglo-American contingent with loans of money. But at first none there recognized him.

Finally it dawned upon Pat McCaffrey that the dapper young Uhlan of the Guard was his countryman from the Far West.

He leaned across the polished bar, breaking a couple of whiskey glasses in his excitement.

"For the love o' Moses, King o' the Jews!" he cried. "Go on home, Tom, an' take 'em off!"

"Take what off?"

"Them duds, man! That there uniform o' yourn!"

"I can't," answered Tom, a twinkle in his eyes. "It's against the military regulations to wear civilian dress without special permit."

"Tom! Tom, me boy!" implored the barkeeper, while the Americans and Englishmen crowded round, laughing, joking, and while the Germans, catching on to what was the matter, made audible remarks about *"verfluchte Yankee Frechheit*—cursed Yankee insolence."

"Tom!" went on McCaffrey, "don't ye know there's a German law ag'in the wearin' o' them duds without ye be entitled to it? Upon me sowl, they'll pinch ye sure an' send you to jug! An' believe me—" he spoke from melancholy experience, "them Prooshan jails is hell!"

Tom laughed.

"Mac," he said, "keep your shirt on. I am . . ."

"Look here!" cut in a snarling, guttural German-American voice.

Tom turned. The speaker was Neumann, the young German bank clerk from New York, whom he had thrashed aboard the *Augsburg*.

"Yes?" inquired Tom gently.

"You have no right to that uniform, you damned Yankee! It's an outrage!" He turned to his compatriots. "I appeal to you, gentlemen. *Es ist eine gemeine Schande!*" Once more he addressed Tom, shouting at the top of his lungs. "You'll go to jail for that, you impostor! You have no right to wear the King's Coat!"

"Oh, haven't I?" rejoined Tom, smiling. "Well, well, well!"

He took Neumann's ear between the fingers of his left hand, pinching cruelly, while with his right he slipped a paper from the top buttons of his tunic.

"Look at that, my lad!" he went on, still pinching, and, unfolding the paper, he showed it to be an army commission signed by the Emperor and countersigned by General von Bissingen, *Platzkommandant* of the erlin garrison.

"I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Graves!" stuttered Neumann.

"Call me *Herr Leutnant!*" thundered the Westerner,

giving the clerk's ear a final, twisting pinch, and the other complied and slunk out of the room.

By this time McCaffrey was arranging bottles and glasses on the bar.

"This one's on the house," he cried. "What's your tipple, Tom, me boy?"

But Tom shook his head.

"Got to keep as sober as a judge this morning, Mac! Thanks just the same!"

"What's the matter? Callin' on yer best girl?"

"You said it!" came Tom's reply, and he walked out to the street.

He hailed a taxicab, drove up to Colonel Wedekind's apartment, and gave his card to the Pomeranian *Bursche.*

"Ach du lieber Herr Jesus!" was all that honest peasant could utter, but the sight of the respected uniform galvanized him into action and he took Tom's card.

A moment later, he bowed over the hand of Bertha.

She, too, was speechless.

But Tom had learned his experience in the "Gross Berlin American Bar." Instead of speaking he put his army commission on the table and asked the young girl to read.

She read, and looked up.

"Why, Tom dear!"

The latter grinned.

"See?" he said, triumphantly, "I got me my little monkey-jacket. And here's my roasting spit!" drawing his saber and making passes at an imaginary enemy.

The girl laughed delightedly.

"Tom! Tom!" she cried. "I am so proud of you.

And I'm proud of Germany for having chosen you . . ."

"Bully! Thanks for the compliments. Sounds like the chairman of the Democratic Party introducing me to a gathering of hicks. And now, just to finish up in style, aren't you proud of Spokane, of America, for having given birth to as dashing a warrior as me? Say!" he went on, very seriously, "aren't you proud of America—just the least little bit?"

"No. You're a German now, too, Tom. As I am!"

"Get off, kid! You're not German, and neither am I! Not on your life! We're both Americans! Three cheers!" he shouted, "three cheers for the American Eagle! May he scream for all time to come . . ."

"Don't let the Eagle scream so loud," came a voice from the door.

The Colonel's mother had come into the room. She studied Tom with her snapping old eyes, and her voice was threaded with delicate malice.

"So you did not take my advice?"

"What advice?" asked Bertha.

"Nothing for frivolous young ears," replied her grandmother, and then to Tom, in an undertone: "Well, since you refused to leave Germany when I told you, since you insisted on staying here, you did the right thing. It is better to hunt with the hounds than to run with the hares."

"What—what d'you mean?" stammered Tom.

"That!" replied Mrs. Wedekind, touching his epaulettes, "and that!" pointing at his sword. "In Germany you must be a soldier—you must belong to the ruling caste—the hounds who hunt! Only—don't

forget that the American Eagle is no more in your life. From now on it is the German Eagle, young man! You are a German!"

"I am not!" stoutly declared Tom, but he discovered before the month was out that Mrs. Wedekind had spoken the truth.

CHAPTER XXV

DER DEUTSCHE

TOWARDS the end of the week Lord Vyvyan returned to Berlin and called on Tom. He was not a bit surprised to see the latter in a German uniform—which rather disappointed the horse wrangler.

"Papers spoke of it," the Englishman said casually, dropping into a chair. "The *Daily Mirror* brought your picture, flanked by that of the latest Pimlico wife beater and the most recent Celtic poet. Must have snapped you when you weren't looking—and labeled you: 'Only American cowboy who goes to sleep to the lullaby of *Hoch der Kaiser!*'"

"I don't," laughed Tom.

"Don't you?" Vyvyan drawled the words. He was a little stiff, a little reserved, in spite of his jocularity, and Tom was conscious of a disagreeable feeling that was almost sharp mental pain. Too, there was a certain mockery in the way in which the Englishman studied his uniform through the concave lense of his monocle.

"Well, there you are, old cock. All in purple and fine linen like a regular bally hero," went on Vyvyan as stiffly as before. "How's your litigation coming on?"

Tom welcomed the turn in the conversation. So he explained what had happened, how he had used five thousand dollars to comply with Alec Wynn's

cabled demand, and drew the remaining sum from his pocketbook.

Vyvyan waved the money aside.

"You'll need all the dough you can lay your hands on," he said. "Life in the Uhlans will cost you a pretty bloomin' penny."

"Yes. That's what Baron von Götz-Wrede says."

"Well, keep the money. I don't need it."

Tom looked up. Less and less he liked the tone and manner of the Englishman, but he said to himself that he must be mistaken. There was no reason in the world why his friend should bear him any ill will.

So he replied very heartily:

"Thanks. I'd be very glad to keep the money for a short time. It'll help me a whole lot."

"Keep it just as long as you care to."

The Englishman rose.

"Wait a moment," said the Westerner; "there's just one little condition."

"Oh?" came the Britannic exclamation.

"'Oh,' is correct! I expect to win that suit, and if I do I am going to give you a block of stock in the mine."

"Heavens, no!"

"It's only fair, Vyvyan."

"No, no, no! I have very special reasons why I do not want an interest in the Yankee Doodle." He looked at Tom. Quite suddenly his reserve melted. He smiled; and, under his breath, he added: "No! It wouldn't be playin' the game."

"I won't take no for an answer," said Tom, and he was so stubbornly insistent that finally Vyvyan, though still protesting, signified his acceptance.

They dined together at the "Auster-Meyer" restau-

rant and it was over coffee and Grand Marnier that the Englishman thawed completely and, with British outspokenness, gave his friend his reasons why at first he had been so stiff and reserved.

"It's that uniform of yours," he said. "I don't like it on an American."

"Shucks! It's only a lark!"

"A lark? Nothing is a lark in Germany. Everything here is done for a reason, a cause, an ulterior, well-thought-out end!" Vyvyan was very serious. "Remember, Tom, a few weeks ago when I said I wanted to take you into my confidence?"

"Yes. Sure I remember." Impulsively he took the other's hand. "Say, old man, if I can help you . . . Any time . . ."

Vyvyan was silent. It was evident that he was going through a mental struggle. Finally he shook his head, and, as in Tom's apartment, he said half to himself: "No! It wouldn't be playin' the game. It's what a German would do. I can't. I fancy I'm a fool."

"Don't be so mysterious," said Tom.

The Englishman refilled his liqueur glass.

"Tom," he went on musingly, "that time, a few weeks ago, when I wanted to take you into my confidence there was that old barrier—built by King George and his silly ass ministry over a hundred years ago, during the American Revolution. Now there's another barrier between you and me."

"What?" Tom was utterly surprised.

"Yes. Another barrier. The uniform you are wearing."

"That bit of blue-and-red cloth won't make any difference to you and me. How the devil can it?"

Vyvyan smiled.

"We'll see. But—will you promise me one thing, Tom?"

"You bet—if it helps you!"

"It's just this. Don't ever sell the Yankee Doodle Glory to a German!"

"Well—I haven't won my case yet."

"But—s'pose you do?"

"All right, Vyvyan. I promise." He leaned across the table. "Say—it's you who sent me that anonymous telephone message the night of my arrival in Berlin, eh?"

"Maybe."

Vyvyan called the waiter, paid, and he and Tom took a taxicab and drove to the Wintergarten to see the Guerrero bend her graceful body to the rhythm of Spanish music, to hear Max Bender sing slangy Berlin obscenities that sent the audience into roars of laughter, and to applaud the antics of Buck Melrose, the eccentric American tumbler.

The performance over, they decided to have a night-cap at the Tauben Strasse Casino, but on the street they came face to face with Colonel Heinrich Wedekind.

Very stiffly he returned the Westerner's salute, but when the latter was about to walk on by the side of his friend, he stopped him.

"Lieutenant Graves!"

Tom turned, surprised.

"Yes, Colonel?"

"A few words with you, Lieutenant!"

There was not a trace of the usual suavity and friendliness in the Colonel's voice. The words popped out, clipped, short, metallic, snarling, arrogant.

"But, say—Colonel!" stammered Tom.

"Was fällt Ihnen denn ein?" came the sharp reply.

"That isn't the way to talk to your superior officer. Say: *'Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!'*"

"Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!" said Tom, stiffly, a great rage in his throat.

"That's better," sneered Colonel Wedekind, "and now you'll go home. To your quarters, sir. At once. I order you!"

Tom was hurt. He was mad clear through. He longed to strike the other with his clenched fist. But though his secret anger partially submerged his intelligence it did not affect his natural caution. Too, he heard Vyvyan's soft whisper: "Look out, old chap!" and so he only allowed himself a slight irony as he replied:

"All right. I get you. So long." And he saluted, clicked his heels, took Lord Vyvyan's arm, and turned to go.

Again the Colonel's harsh bellow stopped him.

"You will go home alone; without—ah—His Lordship. You will not leave your room. I shall see you in the morning. *Guten Abend, Herr Leutnant,"* he snarled and walked away.

"Now—what the hell . . . ?" commenced Tom, to be cut short by the Englishman's sober:

"Do what you are told. The man's your superior officer. Do what you are told," he repeated, very tensely. "Only—for God's sake!—remember your promise. Do not sell the Yankee Doodle Glory to the Germans!" And he hailed a passing taxicab and was off in his turn, while Tom returned to his flat, thinking deeply.

The next morning, shortly after ten, Krauss announced Colonel Wedekind.

The latter was a little more friendly, a little less sharp than he had been the night before, and Tom

was inclined to ascribe the whole scene to a drop too much to drink when the German suddenly said:

"Lieutenant Graves. Let's get to business. I look with great disfavor on your friendship with Lord Vyvyan. That is why I ordered you to your quarters. In the future you will cease associating with the Englishman."

Tom shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he replied. "Vyvyan is my pal."

Again the Colonel flared up.

"What's the matter with you?" he rasped out. "What do you mean by addressing me in that manner?"

"What manner?"

"That American slang of yours. Speak German to me, understand?"

"Say," drawled Tom, "what's wrong with American slang? Isn't it good enough for you?"

"Do not argue, sir, do not argue! How dare you contradict me? Well—you must give up Lord Vyvyan." He rose and buckled on his sword.

Never before, since he had grown up, had Tom Graves come face to face, as it were, with the word Must. It was not contained in the dictionary of his life. He was willing to be proved wrong, to be shown, to be persuaded, to do the right thing as quickly as he saw that it was right.

But . . . *"Must"*?

He said so.

"Don't you give me any of that Must dope," he said. "There's no Must in my makeup. Might as well talk Siwash to me!"

Colonel Wedekind had turned purple with rage. His eyes blazed, his mustache bristled like that of an

angry tomcat, and the veins on his temples stood out like thick, crimson ropes.

"Are you going to obey, sir?" he asked. "Yes—or no?"

"No!" came the horse wrangler's flat dictum.

"Very well, Lieutenant. You are going to pay for this extraordinary, unheard-of piece of insubordination," and he was out of the room, clanking his saber.

Krauss had come in shortly before the last scene. He was very pale, for, in spite of everything, in spite of his calling, he had grown genuinely fond of Tom.

Tom turned to him.

"Say, Krauss," he asked, "what do you think that old coyote is going to do?"

"I am afraid"—Krauss's voice held the suspicion of a quiver—"I am afraid he is going to court-martial you, sir."

"Well," laughed Tom, "he's got another think coming. Me for the protecting folds of the Stars and Stripes!" and he ran out of the room, down the stairs into the street, and jumped into a taxicab.

"To the American Consulate!" he ordered. "In the Friedrich Strasse!"

He knew John Poole, the Vice-Consul, a Westerner like himself, who had watched his progress through the military society of the German capital with a great deal of glee, and was proud of the fact that Tom had obtained a commission in the Uhlans.

Thus, when Tom called on him that morning, he waved him into an easy chair and pushed towards him the cigar box marked "Visitors."

"Have a smoke, Tom," he said hospitably.

Tom lit a cigar, blew out the smoke in a thick, straight line, and touched Poole on the shoulder.

"Poole," he said, "you old Oregonian web-foot, I am in a hell of a mess and I got to have help."

Help to Poole meant money, and he was careful by nature.

"I am sorry, Tom," he said, a little less cordially, "I'm bust myself."

"I'm not asking you for money. I want protection."

"Protection—you? And from whom?"

"I got into a row with my Colonel. Krauss, that's my valet, says I'm going to be court-martialed sure pop. So here I am. This is the American consulate. Go ahead and do what the tax-payers back home chip in their little jitneys for."

Poole cleared his throat.

"Tom," he said, "the American Consulate cannot protect you."

"Eh?" queried Tom incredulously, "what're you giving us? Didn't you hear me say that I am in a pickle up to my fetlocks?"

"Yes. I heard you all right. But—Tom—you are not an American."

"What?"

"You are a German! *Ein Deutscher!"*

"Get off your perch! I didn't take out any citizenship papers."

"You didn't have to. You got your commission in the army. Swore fealty to the Emperor, didn't you?"

"Sure. Well?"

"That little ceremony changed you automatically into a German subject. Tom," he added, "I am sorry."

"So am I, Poole. Damned sorry, to put it mildly!"

And he left the Consulate a sadder and wiser man.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ARMY

THE days passed, rounding into the swing of the week. But no spurred, booted, helmeted orderly knocked at Tom's door to hand him the dread blue envelope, sealed with red, of the summons to *Militärgericht,* to court-martial.

The waiting, the period of uncertainty got on Tom's nerves, and he turned to Krauss for an explanation.

"I have served my three years in the army, sir," replied the valet, "and I found it to be a velvet hand in an iron glove. You never know what to expect —velvet or iron."

"Well, I know what I'm going to give them if they drive me too far. Neither velvet nor iron. Just a good, plain, old-fashioned mule kick!"

But he felt less brave than his words. It was not that he was afraid. Not for himself, that is, for he did not understand that complicated emotion called Fear. He was thinking of Bertha. He had donned the blue and crimson of the Uhlans really more for her sake than for any other reason.

And to lose it now! To be court-martialed, perhaps disgraced?

Why, Bertha was a proud girl, quick, high spirited. She would look upon him with contempt. It would be the end of his love dream—the end of everything worth while in his life, he added bitterly.

And so he was greatly relieved when on a Tuesday, quite early in the morning, Baron von Götz-Wrede called on him and told him that cavalry riding school drill was on.

"You're detailed to it, Graves," he said.

"Me? Gosh. There's nothing they can teach *me* about a pony."

"I know," smiled the other. "Nor are you going to be taught. You are going to teach us, the other chaps."

"Bully," cried Tom, and he accompanied the Baron.

The riding school of the Uhlans of the Guard was a great, square, frowning brick barrack in the Northern part of the town, the ancient part of Berlin, way beyond the Janowitzer Bridge, which, many generations ago, at the time of Frederick the Great, had been the center of Prussian fashion.

To-day it is gray and hopeless and sad. Mile upon mile of jerry-built houses, covered on the outside with stucco, that panacea against all the social and hygienic evils of Berlin, but inside—the inside which the foreign tourist never sees—hotbeds of dirt and vice and degeneracy. Poor students live side by side with laborers, with the countless "police licensed" prostitutes of the capital, with underpaid, underfed clerks. A police station, presided over by a red-faced, bullying, saber rattling sergeant is every five blocks, and on every corner there is a *Destille* or *Stehbierhalle* —a low drinking den. It was in similar surroundings that the Parisian conceived the germs for the great French Revolution that, over night, swept away the cobwebs of Crown and Bourbonism with the clouting, unwashed, impatient fist of Democracy. Not so in the stuccoed slums of Berlin.

Not the slums of liberty gloriously, terribly in trav-

ail. Only the slums of hopeless misery, choking in their own stench and despair.

Liberty, Democracy, healthy Revolution, can only come to Germany from the outside!

It was in that quarter that the Uhlans had built their new riding school, their new, immense stables that were far better than the tenements surrounding them.

Inside, the first man whom Tom Graves saw was Colonel Heinrich Wedekind.

Tom saluted. The Colonel returned the greeting, then talked to the Westerner in an easy, friendly manner as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened, and the Baron, seeing both Tom's belief and astonishment, whispered to him not to mind "Old Ironside" (that was Wedekind's nickname), as he was liable to have martinet fits at times, and there was never any harm done.

Tom was shown through the stables, and the warm reek, the neighing, stamping horses made him forget his uniform. He was himself again, the horse wrangler, the rider, the free man of the plains born and bred to the game of hoof and saddle and quirt.

With zest he entered upon his new duties. Too, with absolute mastery. There was nothing about a horse that he did not know. He did not belong to the older generation of Westerners who broke a horse and, incidentally, its spirit. Tom trained them, with gentle voice, with infinite patience, with knowing hand and a certain sense of humor that seemed to establish a link between man and animal.

And thus he taught the others.

"Back up there!" he yelled to a fussy old major who was pressing his fat knees into a bay mare's

withers. "This isn't a contest of strength between you and the horse! No, no! This isn't the way to make a horse go! Let your legs swing loose. What? Never rode on a long stirrup? Well, here's where you are going to start!"

And, waving aside the stable sergeant who came running up, he himself lengthened the stirrup leathers and adjusted the saddle girth.

He clacked his tongue.

"Get up, major! There—down on your seat . . . Down, I say! Don't hold on to the reins like that! My God, why do you have to have martingales in this benighted country?"

Again, to a young lieutenant:

"Don't lose your nerve, sonny. I'll show you. Got such a thing as a straight bit? No? All right!"

He turned to a farrier sergeant.

"Here. Take this and flatten it out. This way—hammer down the corners. Make it an inch shorter. And look out for the leather slips!"

Thus all morning, and that night, at mess, a consensus of opinion amongst the younger officers would have established the fact that Tom Graves, ex-horse wrangler, was the most popular man in the Uhlans of the Guard.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE STATEMENT

Tom Graves discovered that Baron von Götz-Wrede had not been guilty of exaggeration when he had said that an officer in the Guards must have a private income of at least fifty thousand marks a year.

The demands upon his pocketbook were heavy and incessant.

His uniforms alone, and there were over a dozen of them, from simple fatigue and stable uniform to a gorgeous affair used for parade drill, cost more than Tom back home would have spent for clothes in a lifetime. His full dress sword was a hammered, chiseled, engraved work of art worth its weight in silver.

Then there were the horses, those for himself as well as for his *Bursche* and his stable boy, the latter two new acquisitions. And the horses were not the shaggy, round-eyed range ponies one can pick up at a bargain in the West after roundup. These animals were thoroughbreds, English, Arab, Kentucky, and Hungarian, and they cost a thoroughbred price.

He had to subscribe to the band fund, the regimental charity fund, the mess fund, the *Liebesmahl* fund, and half-a-dozen others. He had to entertain lavishly. Thus the sum which Vyvyan had advanced him melted like snow in a Northwestern chinook wind, and it was not many weeks before he saw the tail end of his roll.

The Baron must have guessed something of the sort.

"I'll buy that mine of yours," he said time after time, with wearying Teutonic persistency, thinking that repetition was synonymous with argument; chiefly one day, late in November when Tom had been initiated into the delights of baccara at a private Club for Guard officers and high Prussian officials called sardonically: *"Verein der Harmlosen*—Association of the Innocent," where, finding out that all his poker training did not help him a whit in a pure game of chance, he had dropped over eight thousand marks to the little Hussar, Graf von Bissingen-Trotzow.

So it was with an ear-shattering whoop of relief that early one morning he opened and read a long cablegram, signed Alec Wynn, which brought the startling news that Truex was not dead, that the litigation against the Yankee Doodle Glory had been dismissed, that Lehneke was in jail, and that once more Tom was on the high crest of prosperity.

"Wedekind and I are celebrating to-night!" wound up the lawyer's message. *"I'll add the cost of it to my fee."*

"Go to it!" Tom cabled back. *"I shall do some little celebrating myself at this end!"*

He did.

First he telephoned to Vyvyan, who congratulated him, but was unable to attend the festivities. Then he gathered about him a baker's dozen of chosen spirits of his regiment.

The celebration began with a dinner at Dressel's, progressed through the half-dozen layers of the Berlin night-life-layer-cake, from a look-in at the latest Metropol Theater Review where, typical of the German capital, the American actress, Madge Lessing, was the female lead, and Giampietro, an Austrian ex-

cavalry officer, the male lead, to the newest Cabaret where the long-haired artist at the piano, a cross between Paul Verlaine and Ernest Dowson, trilled passionate serenades that would have curdled both County Council and Comstock blood; to wind up in a rapid, impromptu switch into civilian dress, at Bissingen-Trotzow's apartment, and a dance at one of the West-end all-night places where stout provincials, on their annual spree, were opening wine, where *cocottes* from all the world had their nightly rendezvous, and where a Bavarian orchestra was trying hard to bring Teutonic order and efficiency into the disorderly, syncopated swing and rhythm of the latest American ragtime tune.

Results: a headache and a brown taste, and a none too pleasant word when early the next morning (Tom thanked his stars that it was a free day, without stable or drill duties) Krauss announced Baron von Götz-Wrede.

"For the love o' Mike, Baron," Tom said weakly, holding his tousled red head, "don't speak to me! Have a heart. I have a feeling like . . ."

"I know. Wait. I'll mix you something that will touch the right spot," laughed the other. He went to the kitchen door and spoke a few words to the valet who, a few minutes later, brought in a steaming cup of coffee cut with kirsch.

"Swallow that!" commanded the Baron.

"You're the doctor!" Tom drank the steaming, aromatic mixture, blinked his eyes, smiled, and sat up. "Say," he continued, "and you're a great little doctor. I'll call you in again. Thanks for coming."

"I had to come. Matter of duty. You see, I am the adjutant of the regiment . . ."

"Sure. Say—is old Wedekind kicking up again?

Threatening me with court-martial for some sin or other?"

"No, no. Just a simple little routine matter." And von Götz-Wrede explained to the Westerner that he had not yet made out his sworn statement of property for the regiment, to be filed with the War Office.

"What statement?"

"Oh—just a little statement. You know our army administration is nuts on system. Here you are!" pulling a blank from the leather manuscript case he was carrying—"Have a look at it!"

Tom took the blank, glanced at it, and, under the direction of the Baron, filled it out.

It read as follows:

Name:	Tom Graves.
Regiment:	Erstes Garde Uhlanen Regiment, Kaiser Alexander.
Squadron:	A.
Stationirt:	Berlin.
Oberst:	Heinrich Wedekind.

Ich erkläre hiermit auf Eid, dass das folgende mein gesammter Besitz ist: (I give oath herewith that the following is my entire property:)

In check account with Deutsche Bank:	Mark:	5789,50
In check account with Old National, Spokane:	Dollars:	9883,37

Horses: Bay mare "Searchlight,"
Grey gelding "Harold,"
Bay mare "Foxhall,"
Chestnut stallion "Boxer,"
Black mare "Upsala."

Bonds:	None.
Stocks:	None.
Real Estate:	None.

Other property: The Yankee Doodle Glory Mine, Hoodoo District, Idaho, U. S. A.

"Sign here," said the Baron, after Tom had filled out the rubrics under his supervision. "That's right!"

He turned the paper:

"And now sign here, Tom."

Again Tom signed his name.

"Thanks," said the Baron, "that's finished. Sorry to have bothered you." He returned the document to his case. "Go back to sleep, old man. Au revoir!" and he left.

All the rest of that week Tom Graves had not a single moment in which to see any of his friends, not even Lord Vyvyan or Bertha Wedekind. He was on duty mornings and afternoons, and had furthermore been detailed to special lectures every evening, including Sundays, at the *Kriegsschule*—the War School—in the Dorotheen Strasse.

It was a typically German experience through which he was passing.

Whatever Baron von Götz-Wrede's ulterior reasons for suggesting an army career to the Westerner, whatever the ulterior reasons of Colonel Wedekind, of Prince Ludwig Karl, of the Emperor himself for confirming the Baron's choice and granting the gazetting, now that Tom actually was in the army, the army proceeded—tried to proceed—to Prussianize him, his speech as well as his limbs, his thoughts as well as his unborn thought-germs, his very imagination, his very morality, his very prejudices. He had entered the crunching maw of the great machine—the greatest, for sheer, cold-blooded, soulless efficiency, the world has yet seen—and it was up to the machine, to the trained engineers who directed its destinies, to turn Tom into the finished product, the stiff, rectangular, disciplined Prussian pattern.

The machine, the engineers, began by calmly assum-

ing that Tom's human life had commenced the moment he joined the Prussian army. What had gone before, his American blood and birth and training and freedom, was not to be considered. It simply was forgotten. Did not exist. Never had existed.

Tom's was one mind, untrained, against a crushing, overwhelming majority of trained minds.

Yet he fought. He resisted.

Unconsciously, of course, for he hardly realized what was happening to him. But there was in his veins a drop of Scots blood from his mother's side, and his father's family had once or twice intermarried with Vermont Yankees, who had left their worked-out farms and taken the wilderness trail. Thus he was of a combative, an argumentative turn of mind. He was in the habit of replying to questions by asking one. He argued in a dryly, persistent manner.

"This is right—and that—and again this!" said his teachers at War School.

"Why?" said the irrepressible horse wrangler. "I want to know."

And it was this incessant "I want to know" which, in the end, saved Tom from a great tragedy.

Thus he resisted unconsciously.

But there was one thing which he fought quite consciously, one thing which he refused to learn, simply because he was not able to.

And that was machinery.

"I'm all right with horses," he told Major Kurt Werningerode, the chief instructor, "and I caught on to the saber and lance trick. But—Gosh!—I'm in the cavalry. What the hell's the use of my learning all that dope about wheels and electricity and steam and things?"

"The cavalry are the eyes of the army," said the Major sententiously. "But what earthly good are eyes without nerves to register what they see, brain cells to store the knowledge away, without hands and arms and legs and feet to obey the nervous reaction of the brain cells? Furthermore," he went on, "what chance has the bare hand against the hand armed with machinery?"

"Sure," admitted Tom. "But, Gee! I *am* a cavalryman. No getting away from that. Let somebody else act the part of the hand, the machine."

"No. In modern warfare nobody knows what might happen."

"Go on! Who's talking of war?"

"I am!" the Major replied succinctly. "That's what we are here for, Lieutenant Graves. The army isn't all cakes and ale and glittering uniforms and parade reviews in front of visiting royalty. War may come . . ."

"Not if I can help it!"

"You won't be consulted. And if war comes, nobody, I repeat, knows what might happen. Just suppose your squadron is rushed in suddenly, on foot . . .

"Not on foot?" groaned the Westerner.

"Yes. On foot. Suppose you are rushed in to support a brigade of infantry. Suppose the day is critical. Suppose the battle, the whole campaign, the very fate of the Empire, depends on the defense of a certain bridge head. For hours it has been shelled. Nearly destroyed. Nearly taken. The sappers and miners have been decimated. The infantry barely holding its own. The reserve is cut off by a vicious barrage fire. But your squadron has been scouting, is there, in direct communication, direct support.

Then it would be up to you, Lieutenant Graves, to do the sappers' work. Up to you and your squadron. That's why you must familiarize yourself with machinery."

He pointed to the blue print on the table.

"Now—as to this lifting-jack," he recommenced his lecture in dry, academic accents, and Tom bent his red head and listened.

But it was of no use. He could not understand, try as he might. His was not the mind to grasp and retain mechanical and scientific details. In every other respect he was a good officer. He knew horses, of course, and had mastered quickly and thoroughly the art of saber and lance. Too, he was an excellent squadron leader, for he had the natural knack of the free Westerner, the "good mixer," to make people obey him without bullying them, and he got on splendidly with the privates and the non-coms. It was the same with his brother officers. Of natural dignity, not to forget natural humor, clean and straight and square, he was socially easy and sympathetic.

But machinery? The machinery of modern warfare?

"Auf Ehrenwort, Herr Kamerad!" snarled little, rosy-cheeked Ensign Baron von Königsmark, recently graduated from the Lichterfelder cadets school and gazetted to the Uhlans of the Guard, "if ever you should have special reasons for quitting the army in a hurry and there was a ninety horse-power Rolls-Royce at your door, all gassed up and ready to leap, you wouldn't know which button to push."

"Right, young fellow," grinned Tom. "I'd rather have one horse-power, as long as it's a horse of flesh and blood and bone, than ninety horse-power of steel

and spark plugs. I'm the original little man on horseback!"

The result was that finally, at least in that one particular, the Prussian war machine gave in. Tom was released from special lectures, and was detailed altogether to stable duties, where he made supremely good.

Thus his evenings were his own, and he spent more than half of them with Bertha.

Regularly he proposed to her. Regularly she refused him. And the next day he would come right back to the attack with a certain affectionate defiance.

"All your fault, Bertha," he said, when she objected laughingly; "you want to turn me into a Dutchman, and I have learned the first trick of their game. I've become pig-headed, see? Therefore—will you marry me, Bertha? I'm just plumb crazy about you!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

HAMBURG-TACOMA

A FEW days later Tom received a letter from Alec Wynn in detailed explanation of the cable that the suit against his ownership of the Yankee Doodle Glory had been thrown out of court.

First the lawyer described the visit of Baptiste Lamoureux, the French-Canadian half-breed, to his office. Together, as soon as Tom had wired the five thousand dollars, they had taken the train to Nelson, B. C., where they had met a friend of Baptiste, another half-breed by the name of Jean Marie Trudeau, a trapper, who had returned a few days earlier from a look at his traps in the Elk River country, where Truex had prospected and where he had supposedly found his death. The three of them had left Nelson on horseback, and had struck across the hills. With the utmost silence and caution, the trapper guiding, they had dropped into a cup-like valley where they had come face to face with . . .

"With Truex," the letter went on, "alive, tied, gagged, and as mad as a hornet—and watched by a two-gun ruffian. But we had the drop on him, released 'Old Man' Truex, who at this writing is still swearing terrible cuss words, and turned Mister Ruffian over to the sheriff at Nelson. The trapper, who had come across the thing by accident, received two

and a half thousand dollars, so did Baptiste, and on last accounts they are both still painting Nelson, B. C., a rich crimson. I returned straight to Spokane, and had a talk with the Prosecuting Attorney. Of course the case was clear. Truex had been kidnapped, and the coroner as well as the three witnesses had been bribed and had perjured themselves. But at first we kept quiet. We did not say a word to Herr Eberhardt Lehneke or his side-kicks. You see, we wanted to catch him good and for keeps. In certain respects, we succeeded. In another, we failed.

"As to the latter, while we got the coroner and the three witnesses by their short hair, we found it impossible to establish legal connection between them—the kidnapping, the fake burial, the perjured statement—and Lehneke. Those fellows must have been paid darned well, for they absolutely refused to implicate their principal. Too, his papers seemed all right. We had to accept them as such, since there were the several sworn statements of the German Consul-General in New York who, thanks to his office, is above suspicion.

"On the other hand, Herr Lehneke made one little mistake. He was too all-fired impatient. You see, the mine had been turned over to a receiver, Seafield Granahan, until the case was completely settled. There was an injunction against your working it. But, as long as the litigation was not finished one way or the other, the same injunction applied to Lehneke. He had no right to work the mine.

"But he did, with the connivance of Granahan, the receiver, who also must have been thumpingly well bribed.

"Lehneke mined some of the ore, treated, and shipped it. We jugged both him and Granahan and

caught the ore shipment, twenty-seven car loads, at Tacoma, where they were backed into a water-front siding awaiting transportation by sea.

"By the way, and this is funny, Lehneke may be a clever crook, but he is a rotten judge of ore. For, after treating it, he carefully left the gold at the mine, merely taking the bulky residue, which contained just a little silver and copper, and of course that unknown ingredient, metal or whatever it is, which disturbed the scientific world so much at the time when Newson Garrett made his assay . . ."

That evening Tom met Vyvyan at the "Gross Berlin American Bar." The Colonel had said no more to Tom about his friendship with the Englishman since their scene on the subject, and so the Westerner saw a good deal of his British friend.

They were sitting in a box, to the left of the bar, where McCaffrey had served them with his own hands.

Tom read the letter to his friend.

Vyvyan listened without a word. Only when it came to the passage of the ore shipment, he gave a little exclamation.

"Well," he said, "it makes no difference. For you . . . " He cleared his throat, and was silent.

Poole, the American Vice-Consul, had come into the room, saw the two, and gave greeting:

"Hullo, fellows!"

"Hullo yourself! What're you drinking?" came Tom's hospitable voice.

"The usual!" Poole said to McCaffrey, who brought him a high-ball of rye and ginger ale.

Poole sat down, opened his evening paper, the *Vossische Zeitung,* read a few lines, chuckled, and looked up.

"Say," he gave judgment, "these Dutchmen aren't half as smart as they imagine."

"Aren't they?" drawled the Englishman.

"Exactly! Greedy pigs, that's what they are. Forever trying to cop all the world's trade by fair means or foul. But once in a while their greed sort of absquatulates with their gray matter."

"Ah—dry up!" Tom gurgled into his glass. "We know you're in the Consular line of easy job and got to look after the dollar-squeezing end of the diplomatic game. But what do *we* care?"

"Well," replied Poole, "you and I are both from the Wild and Woolly. And this . . . Well, I don't want to bore you . . ." He folded the paper and put it in his pocket.

"What is it?" asked the Englishman.

Poole laughed.

"Just what I told you. Once in a while the Germans overshoot their mark. You see, the paper says that the German Government has decided to subsidize a line of steamships, fast steel freighters, half-a-dozen of 'em owned by the H. A., to run between Hamburg and Tacoma, through the Suez Canal, stopping at Singapore and Hongkong for coal."

"Well?" asked Tom.

"Heavens, man!" went on the Vice-Consul, "there isn't enough direct business between Hamburg and Tacoma to subsidize a measly tramp boat. Governments only pay subsidy to compete with foreign ships. And what great foreign line goes direct from Europe to the Northwestern ports? Why, it's ridiculous. It's a great, big, reeking, nickel-plated commercial bull! Yes—these Dutchmen sure overreach themselves once in a while. Hullo?" to Vyvyan, who had risen and had taken his coat and hat, "leaving us?"

"Yes. I have some business to attend to."

"Mighty sudden," said Tom. "I thought we were going to spend the evening together."

"Yes, yes!" The Englishman was already on the threshold. "I forgot something rather important!" and he was out of the room.

CHAPTER XXIX

PERSONA NON GRATA

THE telephone bell cut through Tom's revery with a jarring, acrid twang.

Lazily, half reluctantly, he turned from the open window where he had been sitting, since his return from the "Gross Berlin American Bar," pleasantly shivering in the sudden chill of autumn leaping into winter. It was such a long, still night. Few people roamed the streets of the Westend. A glittering veil of stars was flung across the crest of the night, and a sweet smell was in the air, a mixture of far-off snow and decaying leaves.

Tom had filled his lungs with it. It had made him think of home, his own country, the Northwest.

Dr-rr-rrr came the telephone bell again, with an impatient, accusing note. Tom left the window. He took down the receiver. Next door, in the valet's room, Krauss, too, was gluing his ear to the hard rubber tube.

"Hello."

"Hello, hello," came the voice from the other end of the line. "Is that you, Tom?"

"Yes. Who's that?"

"Vyvyan. Got to see you at once."

"Why—I thought you told me you had important business . . ."

"Exactly! That's why I got to see you. And I don't want that nosy servant of yours to hang 'round and listen."

"Ah—keep your shirt on. Krauss is in his little

chaste dada, dreaming of blond beer, a blond breakfast roll, and a blond *hausfrau.*"

"All right. Be straight over."

Fifteen minutes later a motor-car purred to a stop in front of the apartment house. There was a ringing of bells, angry, impatient voices, a drawing of bolts and slamming of heavy doors, and Vyvyan came into the flat.

"Sure Krauss is asleep?"

"You bet. Convince yourself if you do not believe me."

"That's just what I'll do. Where is his room?"

"There—to the left," said Tom, pointing; and the Englishman walked over on tiptoe, pressed his ear against the door, and listened.

There wasn't a sound.

Very cautiously he opened the door. The electric light from the hall danced into the room, sharply outlining the valet's face. The man was sleeping the sleep of the just, breathing rhythmically and peacefully. Only, as soon as the Englishman had closed the door again, the sleeping man groped underneath his pillow, drew out a long, silk-covered rubber tube that disappeared in the direction of the wall, and inserted the narrow orifice in his right ear.

"Well, what's biting you?" Tom asked his friend, back in the other room.

Vyvyan looked the Westerner up and down, with cutting, sneering contempt.

"I tell you what's biting me," he replied, his voice at first low, then leaping up extraordinarily strong, all his habitual British phlegm suddenly dancing away in a whirlwind of temper. "You are a damned, double crossing, traitorous . . ."

"Hold on! Back up your horse!" Tom's words

came in a deep, soft, feline purr. "Don't you say things for which you might be sorry afterwards!"

"I? Sorry? My God, I'm only sorry for you, you damned . . ."

"Vyvyan," cut in the Westerner in that same soft purr, "I gave you warning!"

"Warning of what?"

"That I am going to lose my temper in exactly three seconds—unless you behave and tell me straight what is the matter!"

The Englishman looked at him in silence for a minute. His Adam's apple worked up and down like a ball in a fountain. He seemed to swallow his rage as if it were some nauseating drug, choking him.

Then he spoke. And his voice was quite cold, quite passionless.

"All right. I know that Germany is a swine of a land. I know that the rulers of Germany hold the charming belief that the rest of the world is a dirty, decadent shrub that must be mulched with caked blood —and that the German sword will supply that same blood. I know that Germany intends to . . ."

"For the love o' Mike, what are you driveling about?"

"Wait. You asked me to explain. And I am doing it. I know that Germany is an ugly beast ready to jump at the throat of civilization the moment the word is said, the moment the leash is slipped. I know how they are working here, for that one end, blood and conquest and booty, with all their might, their energy, their strength. I know Germans. They believe. They obey. They think that whatever is told them by their master is the truth. But you, man . . ."

"What have I got to do with it?"

"You're an American, an Anglo-Saxon, a free man,

an independent man. You are an individual, not a Prussianized number! I can excuse the German man in the street. He doesn't know any better. He has been clouted and flattened into a pattern. But you . . . My God!" Again his passion was getting the best of him. "You . . ."

"Cut out the melodrama! Come to the point!"

"You gave me your promise, your solemn promise, and you broke it! That's all!"

Vyvyan turned to go when Tom's hand caught his shoulder and twirled him round.

"That isn't all by a long shot. What promise did I give you?"

"The Yankee Doodle Glory! You promised that you would not let it get into German hands!"

"Well—didn't I keep my promise?"

"You didn't!"

"I did!"

"You didn't!"

"I did!"

"You . . ."

"Scissors, Vyvyan! One of us two is nutty. Let's figure out who!" The words were spoken with such evident good-humor, such utter sincerity, that Vyvyan controlled himself.

"Tom," he said very quietly, "didn't you sign a statement just the other day?"

"A . . .? Sure. I remember. The morning after Alec cabled me that I had won my suit and after I had gone on that grand, celebrating spree. Yes. Statement of property for the regimental archives."

"Did you read through the whole document?"

"Well—no!"

"Would have been better if you had," Vyvyan said dryly.

"Why?"

"Because on the back of that little statement—and you signed that, too—was a clause by the terms of which you turned your whole property, including the Yankee Doodle Glory, over to the German Government."

"Gee!" Tom was dumbfounded. "I never thought . . ."

"You should have. You should never sign anything, anywhere, chiefly here in Germany, without reading it through first." The Englishman spoke with a certain hopeless, weary despair. "Well—the harm's done—and there you are. I am sorry I lost my temper, old chap. I thought . . ."

"That's all right, Vyvyan. I know what you thought. You thought I double-crossed you. You made it pretty damned plain. And . . ." Suddenly he laughed. "Why," he went on, "there's no harm done. They won't steal my little pot. I am sure the Germans won't take advantage of that clause."

"They won't steal your money. I know. Only—they're going to work that mine for you."

"I have my own engineer in charge. Fellow called Gamble. Good man."

"All right. I lay you long odds—say a hundred to one—that Gamble is going to get the boot, that the Germans will work the mine, and put one of their own men in charge."

"I take that bet," replied Tom. "I am nuts over easy money."

It was only after his friend had left that Tom considered how strange it was that Vyvyan should have known about the statement to the regiment. He was quite certain that he himself had never said a word about it, had not considered it worth while, and he

also knew that the Englishman was not popular with the Uhlans.

Still, there had been a leak somewhere.

Too, he remembered other odd circumstances in which Vyvyan had figured: His appointment to the Berlin attachéship by wireless when the *Augsburg's* apparatus had been out of order; the fact that his aunt had died at that convenient time, leaving him enough money to come to Tom's support when the litigation against the Yankee Doodle Glory seemed hopeless; the Baron's dislike of the Englishman, and his row with Colonel Heinrich Wedekind on the same subject.

"Young fellow," he apostrophized his absent friend, "I don't know a darned thing about that Chinese stinkpot called European politics, but I bet you know more than's good for you, and you aren't half the silly fool you try to make yourself out at times."

It was a rather rueful Tom who, the next morning, opened and read an indignant cable from the Hoodoos, signed "Gamble," in which the latter complained that a party of German engineers had suddenly come to the mine, had produced fully authorized papers, had taken over the workings, and had given him three days' notice.

Tom went straight to the British Embassy in the Wilhelm Strasse.

He found his friend packing his trunk.

"You win, Vyvyan," was his greeting. "Gamble got sacked. The Dutchmen are working the mine. Here you are," giving the other a bank note in payment of the wager.

Vyvyan slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

"Thanks, old top," he said dryly, with a return to his usual inane, slangy drawl. "Come in jolly handy, what? It'll pay my fare."

"Going away for long?"

"Right-oh! Don't s'pose I'll ever come back again to Berlin."

"What?" Tom was astonished. "You mean—you are leaving for good?"

"Exactly. The Ambassador — 'Old Titmouse' — chevied me. Just as I got chevied from Washington. For frightful incompetence. Oh, well . . . I fancy my brother, the Duke, will have to pull a few more wires."

He finished packing, and shook hands with Tom.

"Sorry," he said. "I like you. Well—good-by." Then, suddenly lowering his voice: "And—don't forget—if ever you are in trouble, if ever your own people at the American Embassy should refuse to help you . . ."

"Yes, yes," replied Tom. "I remember. I have to find the guy with the ring. All right."

He drove to the station with his friend, and thence to the regimental barracks.

"Looking blue," was Baron von Götz-Wrede's greeting. "Anything wrong?"

"Yes. My friend Vyvyan has left Berlin. The Ambassador chucked him."

"Oh, no, he didn't!" laughed the Baron. "The German Government demanded His Lordship's immediate recall. His Lordship is *persona non grata* with His All-Gracious Majesty the Kaiser." He put his hand on the Westerner's shoulder. "You see," he went on, "I know. That's why I warned you against Vyvyan. Awfully good for you that he has been sent away."

"I'm not sure of that," mumbled Tom under his breath.

CHAPTER XXX

STORM CLOUDS

THE year drew to its close. Christmas came with snow thudding softly, with jingling sleigh bells, with motley gifts packing the shop windows, with glittering trees.

Came the New Year—Nineteen Hundred and Fourteen—and the Uhlans of the Guard celebrated it with a *Liebesmahl,* worthy of Lucullus, to which not only the officers of the other crack cavalry regiment came, but even the Emperor himself, Prince Ludwig Karl, and the Crown Prince.

The long table at the Hotel Adlon, where the feast was being given, was a mass of crystal and silver, broken here and there by banks of fern and violets, and by tall gold holders with miniature pennants—souvenir regimental pennants, each inscribed in gold letters with the name and date of some historic victory: *"Rossbach," "Lützen," "Belle Alliance," "Metz," "Königsgrätz," "Sedan," "Gravelotte," "Leipzig"* . . . The list seemed endless.

Tom was at the far end of the table, with the younger officers, but he had sharp eyes and could see the length of the room. He studied the Emperor's face. Again, as at that other time when he had seen him, the man reminded him of an old, weary bloodhound.

Tom shivered a little. He was not an imaginative

man, but something unpleasant had touched his soul. He raised his glass of sparkling Moselle and drained it.

The next moment his neighbor, the little, rosy-cheeked Ensign Baron von Königsmark, nudged him in the ribs.

"Graves! Graves!" he whispered.

Tom looked up from the depths of his wine glass.

All had risen to their feet. They stood at attention, facing the Emperor who, his face flushed with wine and excitement, had got up in his turn.

"Meine Herren Offiziere!" the Emperor boomed.

Then hushed, tense, dramatic silence through which the Emperor's words rattled and cracked and thudded like machine-gun bullets.

Tom had steadily improved his knowledge of the German language. But he could not understand everything the War Lord was saying.

Yet here and there a word, a whole sentence, stood out. And he understood—the words at least.

As always, when the Emperor had been drinking, the mysticism, the religious half-madness in his soul, rose to the surface. It blended with his soldier's soul and peaked to a very terrible, a very sinister apex:

"The world—the world outside of Germany—is Babylon!" cried Wilhelm. "Remember the words in the Bible—Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city! And again Babylon shall fall . . . To the touch of the German sword . . ."

Then, later on:

"I see the angels of the Euphrates let loose! Angels with breaths of flame, with eyes of flame, with hearts and souls and hands of flame! I see them, with their flaming swords of vengeance, rushing upon the weak, decadent, Western world . . . The world that preaches the ungodly, accursed sermon of free-

dom for the people and by the people! The angels—the angels of vengeance—the German angels—descend and smite Europe and drown a third part of all her people in blood! They stifle and trample and kill with glowing feet the enemies of Him, our God, our old German God, which is, and which was, and which is to come! The sun is overcast with sable blackness! The stars fall from the firmament upon the earth! Upon the earth blazing in a most frightful conflagration! The sea is blood! The fish and all the creatures of the oceans choke with blood! The world, for its own salvation, must be absterged by a lotion of blood—and it is our duty, our shining privilege, our German privilege to obey the voice of our God, the German God! It is our right to smite the ivory towers of Babylon, to . . ."

"What the devil is he talking about?" Tom asked in an undertone.

"War! War!" The little Ensign's voice was hoarse with a great, unnatural emotion. His china-blue eyes blazed. His small, white hands opened and shut spasmodically.

"Stewed!" was Tom's silent comment. "Stewed to the gills, the whole darned lot of them, including the Emperor," and he succeeded in taking French leave and returned to his apartment.

There was no more *Liebesmahle,* no more jolly mess gatherings, as the new year swung into line. The army, from Count Moltke down to the last recruit, passed into a stage of feverish work, and Tom was kept busy, often late into the night, judging the cavalry mounts that came in endless streams from Silesia, the Rhine Province, and East Prussia.

More horses came. Some from Russia, little shaggy brutes that reminded Tom of the Western cayuses;

sleek-coated, unbroken ruffians from the South American plains; English thoroughbreds and handsome, long-tailed stallions from Turkish studs; squat, bow-legged Mongolian ponies; heavy-boned Belgian and French mares. All the world sent horses, and Tom was in his element. He had been made chief remount officer for the military district of Berlin, and he did not mind the extra work. He enjoyed it rather. It was his old job of the Killicott, magnified a thousand times.

"You see," he said to Bertha one of the rare evenings when he was off duty, "it gives me an additional reason, this work, for sticking to Germany and the army."

"What's the other reason?" asked the girl.

"You. I won't go home without you."

"Why not?" she asked mischievously, well knowing what the answer would be.

And it came.

"Because life away from you isn't worth the living! Why, girl, I know you don't care for me . . ."

"But I do, Tom. I love you like a . . ."

"Stop it!" cried Tom. "Here's that 'brother' again. Cut it out. It makes me mad clear through. I want you to love me like I love you, the right way, the good way, the regular flesh-and-blood way. I don't give a rap for that brother and sister stuff. I want love! The sort that kisses and likes it, by Gosh!"

She laughed.

"I have always thought you were a dear, Tom, and you are. I almost wish I could kiss you."

"Right here's where your wish is going to be gratified," came his quick reply, and he took her in his arms and kissed her full on the mouth.

"Tom, Tom! You mustn't . . ." She tore her-

self away and ran out of the room, colliding on the threshold with her grandmother.

The old lady looked at Tom quizzically.

"Ah," she said in her gentle, malicious voice, "I see that you are becoming more Germanized every day. To the victor the spoils!"

"You bet your life!" replied Tom, noways abashed.

Meanwhile the gathering excitement that had struck such a dramatic note in the Emperor's New Year speech gained speed and strength and a certain threatening grimness.

And not only in the army.

A change, at first subtle, then more and more distinct, finally gross, crept into the public life of the capital, even into the manners of the individuals. All Germany seemed one gigantic masonic lodge, in which everybody knew the pass word, everybody understood the signs and portents, with the exception of the foreigners, including the diplomatic corps.

People still aped foreign fashions. There were still advertisements in the shops of "Latest Paris Mode," "Latest London," "Latest New York," but an ugly undercurrent began to be at work against the foreigners themselves.

Tom was witness at a scene in the street where a German student, and sober at that, publicly insulted a young English girl for speaking her native language. He was about to interfere, but was immediately stopped by Baron von Götz-Wrede, who was with him.

"Remember your uniform," said the latter.

And by the time the Westerner had torn himself loose from his brother officer's grip and had mumbled something succinct about "Damn my uniform!" the student had disappeared.

Another change came into the wording of the restaurant menus. French was barred from them, by unofficial, but forceful, imperial edict, and this edict, ridiculous, petty, was obeyed by the people with absolute, granite, Teutonic seriousness.

Tom laughed.

"Say," he confided to Bertha, "I've always been as fond of spaghetti as a Wop. But when it comes to calling them *Hohlmehlnudeln,* I pass. I wonder if they are going to Prussianize the word 'steak.' "

But it was not only in mean, small details that Berlin was changing. Almost it seemed as if beneath the clean pavement of the streets a gigantic, barbaric soul was beating against the fetters of the West, of civilization, of humanity, as if this soul was about to break the fetters, to push outwards into the world with a crackle of forged steel, to flash its sinister message to the far lands.

Strength! Efficiency! The Iron Fist!

These were the shibboleths of the hour; and ever, more and more, their passion, their challenge, their brutal, satanic leer, grew and bloated.

Months later, when the armed citizenry of France and Britain were battling heroically against the invader, certain of the scenes which at the time he had not understood, came back to Tom, like fragments of evil dream that trouble the sun peace of waking day.

He remembered, for instance, one definite picture.

A crisp winter day; the wind rustling the bare trees of Unter Den Linden; a crowd of students leaving the Pschorr Bräu Restaurant for the University; brokers hurrying on their way to 'Change; a file of Grenadiers of the Guard goosestepping down the street to relieve the watch on the Pariser Platz; a few late tourists looking into the shop windows or issuing from the

swinging portals of Hamburg-America or North German Lloyd; a chilly, orange sun flaming poignantly.

Tom recalled it all vividly. Also the man he saw swinging around the corner of the Wilhelm Strasse: A certain Mr. Trumbull, an American newspaper correspondent, who had a rare knack for foreign political intrigues and who would have made supremely good but for a thirst that never left him.

Tom had met him several months earlier, before he had joined the army.

"Hullo, Trumbull!" he greeted him, hand outstretched.

Trumbull was the worse for drink, but he steadied himself.

"Tom," he said, picking his words with alcoholic precision, "I'd rather be damned than shake hands with you."

"Why?" laughed Tom. "What's the matter? Isn't my hand clean enough for you?"

"It is not!" hiccoughed the other. "It is spotted with blood. I know—even if those silly fools of diplomats are as blind as new-born puppies;" and he staggered down the street while the Westerner looked after him, shaking his head, and muttering something about D. T.'s.

Then there was another memory. A Sunday dinner at the house of the little professor with the tiny red ears whom he had met at the Colonel's and whose name was Kuno Sachs.

Dinner was over. Tom had been talking to Bertha. She had excused herself to say a few words to her hostess. Tom saw a group of the younger officers gathered about the professor in the latter's smoking-room.

Sachs was holding forth, in a high, shrill voice, his

little, wrinkled fists shooting up and down emphasizing his points.

"Nietzsche has said it," he shrieked. "It is the business of the very few to be independent; it is a privilege of the strong. And whoever attempts it, strong beyond measure, daring beyond measure, must see it through to the end. He must not weaken. He must not listen to the cries and threats and accusations of the others, the weak, the useless, the impotent. Strength! *Rücksichtslosigkeit!* That is it. Women and children? They, too, are potentially dangerous! They, too, must be hurled to the oblivion of death . . ."

"Say," laughed Tom, who had joined the group, "aren't you the blood-thirsty little wretch?"

And, at once, there was silence. At once the conversation was changed. Sachs commenced talking feverishly about the palæolithic relics of ancient Egypt; Colonel Wedekind about a horse which he had bought the other day; the little Ensign von Königsmark told a joke which he should have been too young to understand; and Baron von Götz-Wrede mentioned the new ballet at the Opera.

Tom was an interloper. But at the time he did not exactly realize it.

Then there were the new lectures at War School.

"Know anything about French?" Tom was asked one day by Major von Tronchin of the General Staff.

"No! Not a word, except *Oui!*"

"Not enough. You will attend French lessons every afternoon from three to six."

"All right," sighed Tom, who had found out that it was useless to argue when superior officers adopted that tone, "I'll make a try at the parley-voo."

He did.

But it puzzled him that he was not put through a regular course in grammar. All his instructors expected of him was to memorize, like a parrot, certain lengthy French paragraphs and their German equivalent. These paragraphs were on printed forms, several dozen of them, and the lot was collected in a book, printed by the General Staff and marked "Very Confidential," and Tom learned to the best of his ability.

Here are two or three of the French paragraphs, with their German translations, which he was taught:

"A fine of 600,000 marks, in consequence of an attempt made by ———— to assassinate a German soldier, is imposed on the town of O————. By order of ————.

"Efforts have been made, without result, to obtain the withdrawal of the fine. The term fixed for payment expires tomorrow, Saturday, December 17, at noon. Bank-notes, cash, or silver plate will be accepted."

"I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated the 7th of this month, in which you bring to my notice the great difficulty which you expect to meet in levying the contributions. I can but regret the explanations which you have thought proper to give me on the subject; the order in question, which emanates from my government, is so clear and precise, and the instructions which I have received in the matter are so categorical, that if the sum due by the town of R———— is not paid the town will be burned down without pity."

"On account of the destruction of the bridge of F————, I order: The district shall pay a special contribution of 10,000,000 francs by way of amends. This is brought to the notice of the public, who are informed that the method of assessment will be announced later and that the payment of the said sum will be enforced with the utmost severity. The village of F———— will be destroyed immediately by fire, with the exception of certain buildings occupied for the use of the troops." [1]

[1] See "MILITARY INSTRUCTOR FOR USE IN THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY," printed by the German General Staff in 1906. With thanks to Mr. Bruce Barton, editor of *Every Week*.

"Say," asked Tom of Baron von Götz-Wrede one night in January, showing him one of the above blanks, "what's it all about? Are you fellows preparing a Pancho Villa raid on a gigantic scale?"

"No, no. But you know the Kaiser's maxim: 'In time of peace prepare for war.' By the way"—the Baron added suddenly—"if you are tired of the German army, I fancy I can . . ."

"Me? Tired? Not on your life. I'll stick right with you."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"You know what it means?" went on the Baron.

"You bet your life. I'm going to stay with you until . . ." He was going to say until Bertha returned to America, but checked himself. "Yep," he went on, "I'm going to stick all right."

The Baron did not reply.

And, a few days later, tragedy stalked into the even path of Tom's life.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE INSULT

In the morning the new battle standard of the Uhlans had been solemnly presented by the Emperor, accepted in the name of the regiment by the assembled officers in parade uniforms, after which special service, Doctor Emanuel Dryander in the pulpit, had been held at the Cathedral, across from the Schloss.

In the evening Prince Ludwig Karl, the honorary Chief of the regiment, was giving a supper to finish the celebration in his palace near Potsdam that overlooked the placid surface of the Havel Lake.

Tom had been officer of the day at stables and so it was late, nearly eleven o'clock, when he arrived. He walked briskly from the railway station to the palace that towered to the night sky in a baroque, hectic mass of Prussian Eighteenth Century rococo with here and there a reminder of the grim old mediæval stronghold from which it had emerged, which it had superseded—some huge, barred windows, looking incongruously frowning; an immense arch gaping across the blotched shadows of the inner courtyard; a mean, starved chapel, elbowing a great marble stable, and giving the impression of a huddled beggar; and, of course, the little black and white striped wooden houses of the sentinels.

Tom surrendered helmet and overcoat and entered the great ballroom, where the celebration was being held.

The room, its walls covered with paintings stolen by the Prince's father from French châteaux in the war of Eighteen Hundred and Seventy, its ceiling painted by Tiepolo, stolen during the same war and transported bodily, was immense; but not only the officers of the Uhlans, but also those of the other crack regiments stationed in Berlin, Potsdam, Spandau, and Köpenick, besides a great many high Government officials, had been invited, and so the room was well filled.

Supper was over but for an immense buffet running the length of one wall, where liveried servants ladled out the famous moselle and brandy punch of the Uhlans. The guests had split into numerous little groups, and Tom, with a smile and a nod here and there to friends and acquaintances, joined a knot of officers that had gathered around Colonel Heinrich Wedekind.

They had all been drinking heavily and they greeted Tom boisterously.

The Westerner shook hands and was about to raise the goblet of punch that little Ensign von Königsmark had brought him when a hand snatched the glass away and sent it crashing on the marble mosaic floor.

"You can't drink with us!" said a raucous voice.

Tom turned.

"What the devil . . . ?"

He looked. The man who had snatched the glass away, who had spoken the words, was Baron Horst von Götz-Wrede.

Tom was slow at taking offense. His first thought was that the man must have been drinking. Then he reconsidered.

For the Baron was perfectly sober. In fact, had

only just come in. The uhlanka was still on his head, the silver gray cape, lined with crimson, across his shoulders. The insult had been deliberate—and for a cause.

The little Ensign had turned very pale. He liked the American.

"Baron—" he stammered in his high, childish voice, "Baron von Götz-Wrede . . ."

Then the Colonel interfered:

"Gentlemen! I beg of you! Please—no private quarrel here, in the Prince's palace . . ."

Already some of the other groups had heard and seen. They rushed over to find out what had happened. Excited voices asked questions, to be answered by other questions.

"What's the matter?"

"Was ist denn los?"

"Aber, meine Herren," from a white mustached old Colonel, *"was fällt Ihnen denn ein?"*

Tom was the quietest of them all. He smiled at the little Ensign.

"Thanks, young fellow," he whispered. "You aren't such a bad little chap." Then, to the Baron, in an even voice: "Go ahead and explain—if you can!"

There was hushed silence, the tense silence of expectancy, of waiting for something.

Then the Baron's words, harsh, sibilant, snarling:

"Herr Leutnant Graves! You will remember that some time ago the German Government subsidized a line of fast steamships to run direct from Hamburg to Tacoma, coaling at Singapore and Hongkong."

"Sure," replied Tom, puzzled. "What's that to me —or to you?"

"The very first ship of this line, on its return trip to Hamburg, put into Hongkong to coal."

"Well?"

"The British authorities there, through some legal chicanery, have held up the ship. They refuse to give clearance papers. And—*bei Gott!*—it's the work of your English friend, Lord Vyvyan, and your own work, you damned Yankee traitor!"

There was another silence. The little Ensign clutched Tom's arm convulsively, but the latter shook him off. He stepped straight up to the Baron.

"Herr Hauptmann!" he drawled, icily, "I don't know what the devil you're talking about. I have nothing to do with your subsidized steamships nor with the harbor authorities of Hongkong. Also I don't give a damn about your calling me a Yankee. But I object to being called a traitor, see?"

And his fist suddenly clenched and crashed straight between the Baron's eyes, sending him reeling to the floor.

The next moment pandemonium broke loose.

Voices. Questions. Exclamations. Hands gesticulating. More officers running up and closing in. More questions. The Prince himself asking excitedly what had happened.

Only the little Ensign kept his equanimity. He took the Westerner by the arm and rushed him to the door.

"Go to your quarters, Graves," he said.

"What for? I won't run away. If he wants something from me . . ."

"Yes, yes. That's just it! You struck him! You gave him a deadly insult! You must go to your quarters at once! You must wait for his seconds!"

"Oh?" smiled Tom. "A duel, is it?"

"Natürlich!"

By this time they had reached the street.

"I say, Graves," stammered von Königsmark. "You know—I like you"—he blushed like a girl—"may I be your . . ."

"My second? You bet your life, kid!"

And he shook the young ensign's hand.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DUEL

THE little Ensign, Baron von Königsmark, though he had only been gazetted a few months earlier, proved to Tom as the *Stadtbahnzug,* the suburban train, rattled through the night towards the Friedrichstrasse depot, that he was very familiar with duels and their etiquette.

"Yes," he replied to the Westerner's amused questions, "at the Cadets School I was principal and second at several affairs of honor . . ."

"My sainted grandmother!" cried Tom. "You don't mean to say that you little snut-nosed brats at school . . ."

"We already wore the King's Coat!" the Ensign cut in a little stiffly, while Tom murmured weakly: "Holy Mackerel!"

"We must have another second," continued von Königsmark gravely, after the other's mirth had subsided. "Some friend of yours, a countryman by preference. Whom would you suggest, sir?"

"Well. Let's see."

Tom scratched his head. Quite suddenly his lack of real friends, now that Vyvyan was gone, struck him very forcibly. McCaffrey? Impossible. And so were the American and English jockeys who foregathered at the "Gross Berlin American Bar."

A German, then! But—who? He shook his head.

Gosh! he said to himself, he had no friend amongst the Germans, not a single one with the possible exception of the little Ensign, now it had come to a show-down.

By this time the train had pulled into the station, and Tom had an idea.

"I'll get Poole," he said, "our web-foot Oregonian Vice-Consul. Won't he be surprised? Oh, boy!" and he went to the station telephone booth and startled his countryman from sleep.

But it appeared that the latter was not only surprised, but also indignant.

"What?" came his voice across the wire after Tom had explained what he wanted of him. "I—to be your second? Preposterous! Absolutely preposterous! Remember that I am in the service of the American Government! Why, man, the Big Boss back in Washington would have my scalp!"

Poole rang off while Tom returned to the waiting-room.

"What luck?" queried the Ensign.

"Nothing doing."

Tom felt dejected and just a little homesick. He turned to go when, coming from the station restaurant, he saw Trumbull, the American newspaper correspondent who, recently, had refused to shake hands with him.

The man was for passing by without a word, but Tom stopped him, explained his predicament in a few words, and Trumbull broke into laughter.

"Sure," he said, "I am your man. I'll be there with bells. What's the next thing on the bill o' fare?" he asked the Ensign.

The latter explained that he would telephone out to the Prince's palace, see if the Baron was still there,

ask who his seconds were, and arrange for an immediate meeting between them, Mr. Trumbull, and himself, at his apartment.

"Pardon me a moment, gentlemen." He entered the booth.

"Say," whispered Tom to the newspaper man, "isn't he the little fighting cock?"

But Trumbull did not smile. Very soberly he shook the Westerner's hand.

"Graves," he said, "I guess I was wrong the other day. Otherwise you wouldn't . . . Never mind. But take my tip. Shoot to kill. At the very least, put him out of action first pop."

"No, no! What's the matter with you?"

"If you don't, he will."

Tom grinned. "I'll just wing his gun arm."

"I'm afraid that won't be enough. Get him through the lung—and quick."

He had spoken in such a strangely tense manner that Tom looked up curiously. He had seen gun fights in the West, and he knew that odd things are liable to happen when it goes for the life of a man.

He cleared his throat.

"You mean . . ."

"I mean that you are up against a stacked deck!" said Trumbull brutally.

"You're crazy, old man. Götz-Wrede is a gentleman . . ."

"I guess so. But he's a German gentleman, with German standards as to what it means to be a gentleman. And in Germany the first rule for a gentleman is to obey the orders of his superior officers."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies. I don't know you so very well after all, Graves. I am

only helping you because you were an American—once . . ."

"I am still!" cried Tom heatedly.

Trumbull waived the point.

"Never mind. I just ask you to take my tip, that's all."

"But why? For God's sake, why?"

Trumbull gave a cracked laugh.

"Never mind," he said. "I'm only a hopeless drunkard with a fixed idea. They'll tell you so in Park Row—in Washington too, for that matter. I'm just plain bughoused when it comes to Germany and German politics. Don't you believe a word I say. But"—he gripped Tom's shoulder—"shoot straight!"

A moment later the Ensign came out of the telephone booth and reported with a great deal of business-like precision and, too, a certain well-pleased satisfaction that he had arranged the meeting with the Baron's seconds and that they must hurry.

"See you as soon as we get through," he said to Tom. "I suppose it will be pistols. So you had better eat a good breakfast and top it off with a tumbler of brandy neat. Beer, preferably English stout, is all right for sabers, but when it comes to the little old pop guns brandy is the ticket, *Herr Kamerad.*"

He saluted and was off, together with Trumbull, while the Westerner drove home through the waking streets of Berlin.

Krauss met him at the door.

One look at him convinced Tom that, somehow, the man knew what had happened—perhaps, he thought a moment later, what was going to happen. For the valet's face was gray, haggard, deeply lined. His eyes stared anxiously, as at some terrible specter of night, and Tom smiled rather bitterly.

Everything suddenly seemed very clear—and he *had* been all sorts of a cursed fool.

Warning? Why, he had been warned right and left, but he had not even taken the trouble to look more closely, to understand.

The Web!

Who was it had spoken about the Web?

Oh, yes! Lord Vyvyan—to be sure!

And other people, too. Martin Wedekind. And old Mrs. Wedekind, Martin's mother. And Trumbull —and . . .

"Well, Krauss," he asked finally, "what's wrong?"

Krauss stared at him. He tried to speak. Could not. Rather, dared not.

He was a tool, a tiny wheel in the great, cold-blooded, crunching machinery of the German Secret Service. They had clouted and stamped him into a number, a drab, gray, monotonous pattern, cuttingly efficient, soulless, hard.

But . . .

Suddenly he spoke, very rapidly, as if afraid that thought, deliberation, might stop his flow of words; and he blushed very much as the Ensign had blushed.

"Leave Germany, Lieutenant," he cried. "I shall help you. Please leave . . ."

Tom shook his head. He put his hand on the servant's shoulder.

"Krauss," he said, in a low, tense voice, "I thank you. You aren't so bad. But—you cannot serve two masters. And your master is . . ."

"You!"

"Not a bit of it! Your master is Germany. I know —now. It took me a long time to see. I guess I am very much of a damned fool. But I know—now.

Just you brew me a cup of coffee and," he remembered the Ensign's advice, "bring the brandy bottle."

At seven o'clock his seconds returned, looking very grave.

"Stiff conditions," said Trumbull.

"Of course!" Von Königsmark inclined his head. "It was a deadly insult, you know."

"Well," said Tom, "don't scare me to death. What is it? Bricks at a hundred yards?"

"Six shooters at twenty paces," rejoined Trumbull, "continuous fire after the umpire has counted Three until one of you two is dead or completely disabled. Simultaneous firing. I insisted on that. They were going to give their man first shot—said he was the insulted party. But I held out."

Tom smiled.

"Thanks," he replied. "I guess I'll wing me my little bird. It's a cinch."

Trumbull was excited. "Don't you be so all-fired sure. Remember what I told you . . ." But he did not say any more, for Tom, with a warning cough, had indicated the Ensign, who had stepped to the window.

The latter was very nervous. Every few seconds he looked at his watch.

"We meet at nine o'clock in a little clearing in the Grünewald just the other side of St. Hubertus," he said. "We'll have to leave here soon. If there are any letters you want to write . . ."

"No, no, not to a soul," replied Tom. Then he reconsidered.

He did not believe in heroics. Nor in sugary sentimentalities. On the other hand, he was too natural, too simple a man to be afraid of his emotions. He loved Bertha. There was the one great, all-important

fact in his life; and it made no difference that the girl did not return his love.

Should he call on her?

Impossible. It was too early in the morning. Besides, he hardly had the time.

But he must hear her voice, just once, before the duel.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said to the two seconds. "Would you mind stepping in the other room for a minute? I want to telephone to somebody."

A moment later Central had connected him with the Colonel's house.

"I would like to speak to Miss Bertha," he told the servant who answered the call.

He waited. Then:

"Hello, Bertha! Is that you?"

"No!" boomed a harsh voice across the wire. "This is Colonel Wedekind speaking. I forbid you to talk to my niece. You have disgraced the regiment, sir. You . . ."

Tom gave a bitter laugh.

"Say," he shouted back, "cut out the grand-stand play! I get you all right, all right! Efficiency! That's what you call it, eh? But, my God, I have an idea that even German efficiency ought to back water when it comes to a little slip of a girl! Ring off? Sure I'll ring off, you damned old son of a . . ."

He slammed down the receiver, took a deep breath, and called to the other room.

"Come on, fellows. I'm all ready. Let's get through with the slaughter."

They drove down the Kurfürstendamm, across the Halensee Bridge, through the latter suburb, and out

into the snow-clad solitudes of the Grünewald. The woods were silent and crisp, sweet with running shadows and the slanting beams of the chilly winter sun. Far on the edge of the horizon a flush of gold and amethyst was fading into pale blue.

They stopped at St. Hubertus. The old-fashioned road-house was still asleep, with here and there, on the upper floor, a yellow light flickering and leering behind silken window blinds. A circular driveway led up to the massive, cast-iron gates of the little pine park which surrounded the house. Beyond it was the garage.

"Wait for us," said the Ensign to the driver. "We'll be back after a while."

He walked ahead, the other two following, Trumbull talking in an undertone to his countryman.

The Westerner did not reply. He hardly listened. His thoughts were of home. Back there, twenty miles the other side of the Killicott, was just such a pine forest as this one, with just the same cool peace and quiet. He remembered a day, two years ago, when he had ridden through it by the side of Bertha. He remembered how still it had been—he could have heard the breathing of a bird, the dropping of a loosened pine needle.

And the same chilly, distant sun in a haze of gold and silver, and its fitful rays weaving checkered patterns through the lanky trees.

"Here we are, gentlemen," came the Ensign's voice, and Tom looked up.

They had arrived at the clearing. At the farther end was Baron von Götz-Wrede, smiling, debonair, talking nonchalantly to his seconds—the Hussar, and another young captain of cavalry whom Tom did not

know. A little to one side was the umpire, Major Wernigerode, speaking with the surgeon who was sitting on a camp-stool, arranging his instruments very much with the mien of a butcher.

The seconds met, the umpire presiding. All the details were quickly arranged. The distance was marked, the six shooters inspected and accepted, the two duelists placed facing each other.

"*Meine Herren,*" said the Major in a loud voice, "I believe you understand the conditions. Fire at the word Three. Not before. Keep on firing until all barrels are emptied or until death or disablement. Breast to breast. Neither budging, swerving, receding, nor advancing is permitted."

He stepped to one side, joining the doctor and the seconds.

"One!" He counted.

"Two . . ."

There was a roaring detonation, a sheet of flame, immediately echoed by another, double intonation, by two sheets of flame that followed each other so quickly that they seemed to be one.

The Baron had fired first, at the signal Two! Deliberately! Shooting on a foul! Shooting to kill—to murder, rather!

But Tom's eyes, his ears, his brain, his nerves, his hand, had acted simultaneously. He had swerved, dropped to the ground. He had fired—fired again, sure of his aim.

He was unwounded. But the Baron lay crumpled up, his blood staining the snow.

It had all happened in the fraction of a second. At once there was excitement, cries, shouts. The Umpire, the seconds, the doctor came rushing up.

"Foul! Foul!" cried the Hussar, threatening the Westerner with the Baron's pistol, which he had picked up.

The young Ensign knocked it aside.

"Your own man shot foul!" he replied feverishly. "He shot first . . . at the word Two. I saw it. Didn't he, Major? I appeal to you, Major!"

Trumbull gave a strange, cracked chuckle. "You just bet he shot foul. There's no discussing that point—at least"—his voice rose challengingly—"if these gentlemen speak the truth! If their uniform allows them to speak the truth!"

"Mein Herr!" yelled the Hussar.

"Dry up," replied Trumbull. "You can't threaten me worth a whoop in hell. I am not afraid of you, you crimson-coated jackanapes . . ."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, please!" implored the Umpire. "Never mind. Don't you see?" pointing at the doctor, who was busying himself over the Baron's prostrate, unconscious form.

The surgeon looked up, with supreme professional calm.

"He isn't dead," he said.

Tom had not spoken a word. Now he laughed.

"Didn't think he would be," he rejoined. "I know I should have killed him, but, somehow, I couldn't do it. Just a couple of flesh wounds, eh, doctor?"

"Yes. You got him . . ."

"I know," grinned Tom. "I got him through both wrists. That's what I aimed at. Sure!"

He turned to the Ensign.

"Well," he went on, "this is my first affair of—what d'you call it?"

"Honor!"

"Hm!" Tom scratched his head. "Affair of

honor. What the devil would you say was an affair of dishonor? Never mind. But I don't know the ropes. Put me wise. What is the next thing to do?"

"Go home. Wait until you hear from the Colonel," replied the Ensign.

"All right. Home it is." He took his seconds' arms. "Let's get back and have a bite of breakfast."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE NOOSE IN THE WEB

When, around noon, Krauss announced Colonel Heinrich Wedekind Tom Graves looked forward to an acrimonious scene, and was therefore surprised, in a way relieved, when the officer, who was in full uniform, the uhlanka on his head, saber trailing, decorations blazing on his breast, the silver sash of formal occasions running from shoulder to waist, saluted stiffly and showed by his first words that he had no intention of mentioning the ugly words that had been swapped that morning across the telephone.

"*Ich bin hier in Sachen der Ehrenangelegenheit zwischen Ihnen und Herr Baron von Götz-Wrede, Herr Leutnant*—I have called on you in the matter of the affair of honor between you and the Baron," was his opening speech.

"Yes, Colonel?"

"You will consider yourself under arrest for the time-being. *Stubenarrest,* we call it in the army. That is, you will remain in your rooms, under parole, until you hear from the court-martial."

Tom smiled. He was not very much troubled. He knew that duels amongst officers and students and generally the gentry were condoned in Prussia, in fact hushed up, hardly ever mentioned except by the liberal or radical and, occasionally, the catholic press.

He said something of the sort, laughingly, but the Colonel remained perfectly serious.

"Herr Leutnant," he replied, "you are right. We do not make much fuss over a bloodless duel or one where a participant has only been wounded."

"Well?"

"But Germany needs officers. The Emperor has given strict orders that the death of an officer in a duel must be thoroughly investigated—sharply punished."

Tom was startled.

"Death of an officer? What are you giving me?"

The Colonel rose.

"Herr Leutnant," he replied, "I regret to inform you that Baron von Götz-Wrede died from the effect of his wounds a little over an hour ago and . . ."

"You're crazy, man," cried the Westerner. "I only disabled him. Shot him through both wrists. What are you trying to do? Scare me? Look here . . ."

The Colonel's gloved hand commanded silence. He rose.

"The Baron died," he said. "The official, regimental inquest is this afternoon. I repeat that you are on parole until then. You will not leave your apartment nor try to communicate with a soul. I may be allowed to add," he wound up vindictively, "that you needn't try any of your American tricks—that you needn't try to telephone to your so valuable friends at the British Embassy. Central has received instructions to listen in on your telephone conversations." And he left, his saber rattling behind him, while Tom muttered savagely to himself:

"Sure. I get you all right. I know what that parole dope amounts to. Parole? Hell! You got your jackal, Krauss, to watch over me! Trying to catch me with the goods, eh?"

He paced up and down.

His thoughts were in a whirl.

Why? It wasn't credible. It wasn't possible.

He knew a thing or two about flesh wounds. He had had experiences out West, as a boy, before peace had come to the range.

And the surgeon had said that the Baron was not dead, that the wounds were not dangerous.

What was it then?

A—frame up?

No!

He had changed his earlier ideas about Germany and the Germans. No more he believed in the kindly, rather stolid folk that heretofore had been the Teutonic prototype in his provincial, American imagination. He had learned better since then. But he told himself that even soulless German efficiency would stop at killing one man, the Baron, so as to get him, Tom, into the clutches of the law.

Too, why this deliberate intent to get him?

Vyvyan had spoken about the Yankee Doodle Glory. There was some secret mixed up with that cursed mine in the Hoodoos. The Hoodoos! Rightly named!

But—the Germans owned the mine to all intents and purposes. They had their own engineers at work. They controlled the output!

What then had happened?

Perhaps blood poisoning had set in.

No! The Baron was the very picture of health and strength. Blood poisoning wouldn't kill him in such a short time.

Perhaps . . .

Up and down, up and down, he paced. Only one thing was clear: Somehow, the Baron had died from the flesh wounds, which he had inflicted on him; and,

with the realization, Tom became conscious of a sharp regret in the back cells of his brain.

He had not meant to take a life. Of course, the other had shot foul, had fired at the signal Two, had tried to murder him. Still, the man was a German, an officer obeying orders, whose slogan, for right or wrong, was *"Zu Befehl*—at your orders!"; and, somehow, the Westerner found it in his big, generous heart to forgive.

No, no, before God—he had not meant to take a human life!

Tom felt utterly alone. In all those teeming Berlin millions there was not one soul he could trust, not one friendly hand that would stretch out to grasp his, to pull him from the mire.

Poole? Tom smiled bitterly. Poole was the Vice-Consul, a good enough fellow to drink and joke with, but scabbed with official dry rot, scared to death of losing his pull back home.

Bertha? Old Mrs. Wedekind?

No. He was not the sort to hide behind a woman's skirt, and even if he wanted to, there was Krauss on watch.

Krauss! And how many others? All thin, steely, inexorable meshes in the Web that was about his feet!

He clenched his fists until the knuckles stretched white. He saw red.

In that hour a terrible, corroding hatred of Germany, of all that Germany stood for, was born in Tom Graves' soul.

He stepped to the window and looked out. The streets were covered with a thin, flaky layer of April snow, but people were hurrying in all directions, rosy, plump, well fed. A squadron of Dragoons cantered to the West, towards Halensee, their triangular pen-

nants fluttering in the low wind, their lance butts creaking against the saddle leather, their sabers flickering like evil cressets. He heard the snarling voice of the squadron leader:

"Rechts! Rechts! Angaloppirt!"

The army—the army—and again the army! Guns and sabers and pistols and horses!

And why? What for? What was the idea in back of it?

Pomp and circumstance?

No! A nation, an efficient, thinking nation like the German, did not drain its financial blood just for show and glitter!

He remembered the Emperor's speech at the time of the flag celebration—the little professor's words—other things he had heard, from the lips of Colonel Wedekind, the Baron, even the young Ensign. Empty boastings, silly vaporings, he had thought them at the time.

God above! How he hated them! And what a fool he had been—what a cursed, cursed, purblind fool!

And Krauss?

There was another of 'em. He rushed to the corridor. He'd get his hands round that fellow's throat. He would squeeze, squeeze. There would be one of them gone to perdition anyway. Not that the desire to kill was articulate, deliberate. Rather, an instinct, an overpowering, unthinking impulse . . .

But he stopped on the threshold.

For he saw that the outer door was ajar. He heard voices soft, yet very tense, very excited.

One was that of Krauss, talking through the crack in the door:

"No, no, *gnädiges Fräulein.* I can't—honestly! I have my orders. Please . . ."

"Dear Krauss! I must see him," came the other voice.

It was Bertha's, and Tom cleared the length of the corridor, opened the door, drew Bertha inside, and faced the valet who was standing there, a picture of abject misery, terrible indecision.

Tom was very quiet. Gone was his desire to kill.

"Krauss," he said, "I guess you still have a few decent instincts left."

"I—I . . ."

In his own simple way Tom knew the human heart, the human soul. He slapped the other on the shoulder.

"Sure you have. You bet you have. You're just scared of the fellow higher up. They drilled and trained and punched and kicked your poor old soul till it creaks. But—Gosh—you are a man, aren't you? You got some decency, some kindliness. 'Fess up, man! There's nothing to be ashamed of."

Krauss bowed very stiffly.

"You are right, sir," he replied. "I have some—ah—decency, kindliness. I—am blind, deaf! I see nothing. I know nothing!" and he bowed again and went to his room, softly closing the door while the Westerner ushered the girl into the little salon that overlooked the Kurfürstendamm.

"Well, Bertha?" His words seemed very foolish, very inadequate.

She looked at him, her eyes brimming with tears, her lips working convulsively, her narrow, white hands twitching nervously.

She tried to speak. Could not. Just a faint,

choked gurgle deep in her throat; and Tom, his very soul torn by love, by pity, by a great, fine longing, put his arms around her shoulders. There was no thought now in his mind about his own predicament. Bertha was in trouble. That was all that counted.

Clumsily, he patted her cheeks.

"Tell me, child," he whispered. "Tell me, honey. Come on—tell me, best beloved!"

Through her tears she smiled at him, just a little mischievously.

"You mustn't take advantage of me—because I am in trouble—to . . ."

"To kiss you?" Tom, too, smiled. "All right, Bertha, I'll wait until after you've told me. Now"—very seriously—"What is it? All right. Take your time!"

And Bertha told him: A long pitiful tale, another tale of the Web that out there, from the Russian frontier to the French, from the Channel to the Alps, even far across the sea, in the United States, Brazil, China, Morocco, stretched its fine, steely, pitiless meshes.

CHAPTER XXXIV

BERTHA SPEAKS

HER first words flattened into a low sob, but one that Tom, somehow, was glad to hear:

"I am homesick, Tom. I want to go back to our own country, to America, to Spokane!"

"Why, child," he smiled, "what about . . ."

"No, no, no! Do not tease me! You *must* not tease me! I can't stand it, Tom!"

"Of course not. Forgive me, dearest. Sure—you are homesick! You want to smell the scent of the pines. You want to see the open range. And you're going home. On the next ship, see? Straight away! We'll fix that little matter in no time!"

Her reply came very sober, but with a certain tense, dramatic suppression:

"I wish you could. But I am afraid . . ."

"Afraid that I can't fix it? Shucks, nothing to it!"

She shook her head.

"You don't understand, Tom. Wait. My thoughts are all so frightfully confused. There's so much to tell you, so very, very much. You must be patient with me."

Tom was shocked, less at her words than at the inflection of her voice, the hunted, tragic look in her eyes. Always, as he had known her, she had been high spirited, willful, a little spoiled by both her parents, yet more spoiled by her uncle and the young officers who crowded her uncle's apartment.

But, suddenly, a change seemed to have come over her. She was . . .

Crushed! Yes. That was the word.

He drew in his breath. Again his hatred against Germany, all things German, surged through his soul like a crimson, murderous wave.

He controlled himself.

"Tell me what has happened," he said, his words coming one by one, staccato, very distinct.

"I will, Tom," and she said that for many weeks past she had wanted to go home.

"But—I don't mean to tease you—but, dear, you told me that . . ."

"I know. I was stubborn—and foolish—and—I—what do the Chinamen call it? Yes. I wanted to save my face. Before everybody. Before you. Even before myself. I did not want to own up to it that my heart was simply crying for home, simply choking with the desire of it. I guess I must have been homesick ever since Christmas. Perhaps it was the Christmas feeling that started it. You know—back home—at Christmas—mother—father . . ."

"Sure, child. I know."

She dried her eyes.

"I told uncle. And he said yes. He would get me my ticket. Any time I wanted."

"Well?"

"I asked him time and again. But always he made some excuse. He told me the ship was crowded. Another time that he had forgotten. Again that the Uhlans were giving a dance and that I was specially invited. Then I wrote home to father, and asked him to send me money for the ticket."

"Why didn't you do that in the first place?"

"Uncle and aunt asked me not to. They said that

they had invited me to Berlin, that it was up to them to pay my fare back home."

"Well? What happened? What did your father reply?"

"He didn't reply!"

"What?" Tom was utterly amazed; and the girl explained to him that in the Colonel's house all details, large and small, were attended to with absolute military precision. All letters were collected by the *Bursche,* who stamped them and took them to the post office. She had written twice a week, asking her father to cable the money. But no answer except some letters that must have crossed hers and that complained because she had not written for weeks.

Then, two weeks ago, she had gone to her uncle's study during his absence to get her grandmother a deck of solitaire cards and, quite by chance, she had looked into the waste-paper basket.

"And I saw there a letter I had written the day before—torn to pieces! Tom! Uncle never mailed any of my letters! I am sure of it!"

"Heavens! What did you do, Bertha? Didn't you kick up a . . ."

"A row? No."

"Why not?"

"I was taken aback. I was frightened, so frightened. I rushed into grandmother's room and told her. And she made me promise not to say a word to uncle. She told me she couldn't explain to me, that I was an American, that I did not know Germany, the German army, the German system. She said to give her time. She herself would arrange matters."

"Why didn't you come to me—at once?" Tom was hurt.

"But I told you. I was ashamed."

"Sure." He inclined his red head. "Go on, child. What did grandmother do?"

"I guess she must have cabled at once. For this morning she received a letter, and in it was one for me asking me to rely absolutely on you. Father seems to be afraid for me—of something. He doesn't say of what. I suppose he thinks I'm just a silly little goose—and," she sobbed, "he is right. I have been so foolish, so frightfully, frightfully obstinate! He writes that I must be very careful, very silent, very circumspect. He, too, says, just like grandmother, that I would not understand, because I am an American. And, Tom dear," she added with a pathetic little sigh, "I always imagined that I was so thoroughly German!"

Tom could not suppress a smile.

"Little error of judgment," he said. "Happens in the best regulated families. What else did your Dad say?"

"He enclosed another letter in grandmother's—for you. Grandmother believes he must have been afraid to write to you direct."

Tom gave a little exclamation of approval.

"Some little gray matter your father's got! All right. Let's have his letter to me."

Bertha gave it to him, and he read.

"Dear Tom," wrote Martin Wedekind, "you must come back to America as soon as possible together with Bertha. She is safe with you, and with nobody else. She must not go alone. I would come to Germany myself, but I have every reason to believe that that would make matters worse. I doubt, in fact, that the Germans would let me cross the frontier. Tom, it's up to you. You are in the army, but you

must get out of it. I rely upon you implicitly. I know that you love Bertha, that, somehow, you will succeed.

"Let me explain to you everything as far as I can.

"Over a year ago, shortly after Newson Garrett assayed the Yankee Doodle Glory ore and discovered the unknown ingredient which at the time made such a stir in the scientific world, I received a letter from my brother Heinrich. He asked me to remember that I am a German by birth, that Germany never forgets her sons, that I owe everything to Germany, my blood, my training, my education. He wound up by begging me to assist Baron von Götz-Wrede, who was coming to the West, if he wished to buy the Yankee Doodle Glory mine. At once I became suspicious. I always am when a German, chiefly an officer or a Government official, asks me to remember that I am a native of Germany. There is always a reason for that bit of clanking sentimentality, and that reason is always fishy. So I decided to be careful, the more so as Newson Garrett told me that he had sent specimens of the ore to a German chemist in New York for further examination, as you had received a cable from Johannes Hirschfeld & Co. in Berlin offering you a tremendously big price for the mine, and as Truex, too, had received a similar cable.

"So, instead of helping the Baron, I put obstacles in his way.

"Then you went to Europe. A day later came the cable from my brother with the news that my mother was very sick and wished to see Bertha before she died. Naturally I let my daughter go. When, later on, I discovered that my mother was well, that the cable had been misspelled in transmission, I thought it strange, but not enough to worry over. Then came

the Lehneke affair. You joined the army. Shortly afterwards the affair was settled in your favor. But I did not feel relieved. I was not a bit surprised when Gamble got his walking papers and German engineers took charge of the Yankee Doodle Glory output. I know how they do things in Germany and had no way of warning you.

"I did not know why the Germans wanted the mine. I do not know now. I only know they *do* want it—and they have it.

"So I resigned myself to the fact of it until yesterday, the thirtieth of April, Nineteen Hundred and Fourteen, I received my mother's cable asking me to see to it that Bertha returned to America at once. I had not had a line from Bertha for weeks. I can imagine the reason. I repeat, I know Germany.

"I was for going straight over when, just as I was about to arrange about tickets, I received a visit from a German who refused to give his name. But his words were succinct, to the point.

"He told me that a subsidized German steamship line was running from Tacoma to Hamburg, via Hongkong. He told me that the British authorities at the latter place had refused clearance papers to the first steamer. Therefore the German Government wished succeeding steamers to sail under the American flag, since they were sure that the British would not interfere with the Stars and Stripes. He asked me to play dummy, and he offered me two hundred thousand dollars spot cash for the job.

"I refused, flatly. For the man was not a German-American, a plain business man, but the home-grown, home-bred product, short spoken, impudent, rasping. In other words, a German official specially sent for the purpose of seeing me, of offering me money for

something that, at first sight, did not seem to pay—them, the Germans. And I always mistrust a German carrying gifts. He is rather like the Greek of history in that respect. So, I repeat, I refused.

"But my visitor smiled. He told me very calmly that I would have to come to terms. I asked why, and he replied, still very calmly, that my daughter would be held a hostage in Germany until I agreed.

"Yes, Tom! A hostage! In this, the Twentieth, the civilized Century!

"Even then I refused. You see, Tom, I love my daughter. But, too, I love America. I owe everything to America. My roots are here, my soul, my heart, my very secret being—and—I do not trust Germany. I don't know what it is. But I just feel that I would do wrong in doing what my unknown visitor asked me to.

"I did not give him all these reasons. I simply showed him to the door. He bowed in the regular, stiff Prussian fashion. He said that it would be quite useless for me to try to go to Germany, to rescue my daughter—for that is what it amounts to—and I know that he is speaking the truth. Thus I rely on you, Tom. It is up to you. You must do it, somehow. You must, Tom! (*The words were heavily underlined.*)

"I am afraid to address these lines to you. Your mail will be watched from now on. So I am writing to my mother and enclosing this letter, as well as one for Bertha. I don't think Heinrich will interfere with mother's mail. He is nearly as scared of her as he is of his superior officers."

Tom looked up.

"How did you manage to get here?" he asked.

Bertha smiled.

"Oh, it was a regular escapade. You know, heretofore I have never been out alone. I was told by uncle that it was not good form in Berlin. And I believed him. Now I know. He did not want me to be able to communicate with anybody, and so I was always either with him, or with aunt, or with some of the officers. To-day, after the letter came, my dressmaker came to the house, and I"—she smiled through her tears—"I grabbed her coat, rushed out of the room, locked her in, and was out of the house down the back stairs before anybody knew what was happening."

"Bully for you, kid!" applauded Tom. "There's the right American spirit. And now—watch your Uncle Dudley. I'll get you out of Germany all right. Come along. We'll go . . ." Suddenly he was silent.

"What is the matter, Tom?"

"I—I—" Tom was making a painful effort to choke back his words.

But she remembered the valet's words, how he had told her he could not let her in, that it was against his orders.

"Tom!" she cried. "Tom! Tell me!"

His hands opened and shut spasmodically. Then he told her. He had to. There was no way out of it.

"Bertha," he said, "I am under arrest. I am going to be tried by court-martial . . ."

"For what?"

"I don't know. Manslaughter, I guess. Perhaps murder. God knows."

"Murder—you . . ."

"Yes. There was a duel. I shot . . ."

"Whom? Whom, Tom?"

"Baron von Götz-Wrede. I killed him. No, no!" as he saw that she was about to collapse. "Don't give way, honey! You've been so bully, so brave. Don't give way now. Everything'll be all right. Come with me."

He grabbed his uhlanka and his silver gray cape, and accompanied her out to the corridor. Already his hand was on the door-knob when he heard Krauss' voice in back of him.

"*Herr Leutnant!* I have orders to . . ."

"Sure. I know. And this time I guess there's no persuading you to be influenced by your decent instincts, your kindly impulses?"

The valet blushed.

"I regret, *Herr Leutnant.* Somebody may come—perhaps the Colonel himself . . ."

"And then you'd be in a hell of a pickle. All right. Here's where I turn Prussian—and here's where you give in to the unanswerable Prussian argument!" and he whirled quickly, clenched his fist, and drove it straight to the other's jaw.

The man fell like a tree cut away from the supporting roots.

"Here, Bertha," commanded Tom, "lend a hand."

Bravely the girl helped, and between her and Tom, two minutes later Krauss was in his room, on his cot, securely tied and gagged.

They went down the stairs as if nothing had happened and hailed a taxicab.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

Tom was going to say the American Consulate. But he remembered his former experiences. It would be all right to give the girl to Poole's protection, but there was Martin Wedekind's injunction that she must not travel alone, that it was up to Tom to bring her.

For a moment he was puzzled.

Then, quite suddenly, he thought of Vyvyan, of Vyvyan's warning, of Vyvyan's ring—the little simple silver affair with the figure of a grayhound engraved on the round shield and above it the letters: *B. E. D.*

"To the British Embassy!" he directed the driver. "Just as quick as you can!"

CHAPTER XXXV

BACK FIRE

By the time the machine reached the Leipziger Strasse it was fairly late. The sidewalks were packed with a homing throng of clerks and girls from banks and counting-houses and department stores. Trucks and motor-cars, often driving three abreast, busses and surface cars, clanked and hooted down the main roads, splitting here and there to deliver their freight, human or otherwise, in the Southern and Western suburbs. The white-gloved policemen had their hands full, and Tom fretted as his taxicab was caught in a crush at the corner of the Wilhelm Strasse.

By this time the inquest must be nearly over. Somebody might call at his house, perhaps try to reach it by telephone. He was playing the game by a dangerously narrow margin.

He breathed a sigh of relief when finally the machine made the corner and purred down the Wilhelm Strasse, past the stolid, gray bulk of the Agrarian Bank, past the red sand-stone monstrosity of the Berliner Bank, past the Radziwil Palace and the back entrance to the Chancellor's park, and he felt very much like a Moslem pilgrim when he beholds the sacred Kaaba standing out above the yellow Arabian desert, or a nervous skipper who makes port after a stormy crossing, when the British Embassy came into view, a beautiful little marble building, cool and white

and gleaming, pagan in its utter Greek simplicity.

The taxicab stopped.

"Na—hier sind wir ja, Herr Leutnant!" came the driver's jovial voice, and Tom jumped out, giving Bertha a helping hand.

It was now very dark. The trailing, swift shadows of April were dropping like a cloak—grim, portentous—and Tom shivered a little, involuntarily.

"Come on, Bertha. We've no time to waste, and I've got to find me my unknown friend inside."

Already he had crossed the sidewalk. Already his foot was on the first step of the short flight of stairs that led up to the main entrance of the Embassy when, suddenly, there was a rush that carried him off his feet, away from the girl.

Tom swore, looked, hit.

Half-a-dozen men had jumped from the shadowy gateway of the bank building that was next to the Embassy. They were officers all. Some were of the Uhlans, men he knew, others were infantrymen whom he had met casually.

He heard the Colonel's voice:

"Get him. He's dangerous. No, no—don't kill him!" as a saber flashed free, gleaming evilly in the flickering light.

Somebody had blown a whistle. A platoon of policemen came panting up at double quick step. They drew a cordon around the scene, screening it against the excited, curious crowd that poured up the street and from neighboring houses.

A window opened in the Embassy.

"What is the matter?" inquired a woman's voice, anxious, in English.

Nobody answered. There was no time. For Tom kept his assailants busy. He had left his saber at

home, but his fists flew out, right and left, right and left, up and down, like flails. One man went down. Another, cursing:

"Der Kerl ist ja verrückt!"

"Das ist ja ganz unerhört . . ."

And again Tom's fist descended, taking toll. He fought silently, shrewdly, with a certain savage, ringing joy in his heart.

He heard Bertha's stifled outcry; and he redoubled his blows.

"Damn you!"—as a man grabbed him around the neck, from the back, and his foot kicked sideways and up—and a howl of pain.

But the odds were against him. The flat of a saber struck his right elbow, paralyzing it. He fought on with his left, blindly. That, too, was disarmed. Somebody hit him in the face. Blood squirted, half blinding him; and the last thing he saw as he was being dragged towards the cab that was still at the curb, was Colonel Wedekind. He was holding Bertha by both arms, pressing the elbows back until they touched each other. The girl's lips were tightly compressed, but she did not utter a sound. Somebody had called another taxicab, and a young lieutenant of infantry was holding the door open.

The Colonel forced the girl inside. He addressed the lieutenant in a snarling, cutting voice:

"See her home, Baron von Blitzewitz. Let nobody near her. Watch over her until my return. No excuse, no loop-hole! She is your prisoner, and you are responsible. Understand?"

"Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!"

Lieutenant von Blitzewitz saluted, clicked his heels and entered the car, which purred away while the Colonel turned to the Westerner.

His little blue eyes blazed with fury. His fists were clenched, he was about to strike Tom, who was helpless in the grip of half-a-dozen officers. But he controlled himself.

Only his words came, venomous, triumphant, quick, like machine-gun bullets:

"Got you. Right in the act. About to communicate with the enemy of the Fatherland, eh?"

Tom's wits had a trick, learned at roundup and, too, if the truth be told, at poker, of acting quickly and tellingly when he was in a tight corner, with the odds against him.

"Who's the enemy?" he inquired gently.

"You tried to enter the British Embassy!"

"Well? And since when are England and Germany at war?" came Tom's jeering rejoinder.

Wedekind choked down his reply.

"In with him!" he bellowed at the officers who were holding Tom.

They obeyed, and the Colonel entered after them, having given the driver Tom's address. The machine clanked away.

But all the way home Tom fought savagely, joyously. He was convinced that his captors had positive instructions not to kill him, and so he took advantage of the situation. At every opportunity his fists flew out, finding their mark, and it was a torn, bleeding, perspiring, cursing group of Prussians that finally entered the apartment on the Kurfürstendamm.

There the officers surrounded him with drawn sabers while the Colonel faced him, speaking quickly, hectically.

"You will be tried for the death of Baron von Götz-Wrede." He smiled cynically. "A bad enough of-

fense that. No mercy will be shown you. And so—ah—I shall be considerate enough not to press all the minor charges against you: The breaking of your parole, resistance to arrest, striking your superior officer—" he touched rather gingerly his right eye that was framed in prismatic green and heliotrope where the horse wrangler's fist had come into contact with it. "I give you fifteen minutes to pack your trunk.

"Hauptmann von Quitzow! Leutnant von Bayerlein!" He turned to the two officers. "You will watch the prisoner while he packs. Krauss!" to the valet who had appeared on the threshold, "help Lieutenant Graves. Quick! Fifteen minutes! No more!"

"Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!"

The two officers marched the Westerner into his bedroom, Krauss following, where Tom rapidly threw the necessary articles into his trunk.

Krauss helped loyally.

"Sorry, old fellow," whispered Tom as, both bending over the trunk, his head touched that of the valet. "Didn't mean to hit you so hard."

Krauss muttered an indistinct, tearful reply, and Tom put his hand in his pocket, came out with a hundred mark banknote, and pressed it surreptitiously into the other's hand.

A minute later he straightened up.

"All ready, gentlemen," he said. "Lead on. By the way"—to von Quitzow, whom he knew fairly well from riding drill—"what's going to happen?"

Von Quitzow shook his head sadly. He was a tall, very fat, red-faced *Junker* from East Prussia who, a musician by nature, had only entered the army because his father had forced him. He was a good enough officer, who took his duties seriously, but, un-

derlying it, was a streak of hot, heavy, rather boyish sentimentality that came to the surface at odd moments.

Now he shook Tom's hand.

"Our orders are to get you to Spandau, to the fortification—*Festung,* you know—military prison. I am sorry, Graves. I wish I could . . ."

"I get you all right, sonny!" came Tom's cheerful reply. "*'Zu Befehl!'* That's what's biting you, eh? Never mind. It'll all come out in the wash."

And he went into the other room, saluted the Colonel, walked down-stairs and, two Uhlans with drawn sabers right and left, entered the waiting taxicab without showing further fight.

But his thoughts were feverishly at work.

For there was Bertha.

It was up to him to see her safely out of Germany!

CHAPTER XXXVI

SPANDAU

THE gray, frowning walls of Spandau fortress swallowed Tom. Cut off he was from the world outside, in a small, neatly furnished room with bathroom attached, the windows doubly barred with steel, the doors, too, of steel and patrolled day and night by armed sentries. The food was good and plentiful, the treatment courteous but severe. Each day he was allowed three hours for exercise on the *Kasernenhof*, the barrack yard.

"I regret it," General Unruh, who commanded the officers' prison wing of the fortress, explained to him. "As a rule, the officers here are allowed complete liberty. Are put on parole. But I understand that you broke parole in Berlin. *Tut mir leid!*"

Tom resigned himself to the inevitable. With his clear, simple mind he thought the situation over from the start to the probable finish.

The court-martial would come soon, and he had decided to play there a certain card. He would speak out, straight out. He would tell everything that had happened, exactly, without omitting a single detail, not only as to the duel, but also as to Bertha Wedekind and the reason why he had broken parole. For he had begun to realize that, at the very best, he was in for a term of years in *Festung*. Thus he would be unable to do what Martin Wedekind had asked him to—to see Bertha home to Spokane personally.

He would therefore do the next best thing. He would raise such a row that the Germans simply would not dare double cross.

Yes! He would give it to them, straight from the shoulder, regardless of what might happen to him.

Of course he knew that court-martials were held in secret session, but something of the evidence given there was certain to leak out, into the outside world, the press, the ear of some sharp American newspaper correspondent, perhaps Trumbull, and the American Government would automatically be forced to act so as to protect Bertha.

There was no doubt of it, and so Tom awaited the summons for court-martial with impatience. He was anxious about Bertha, terribly anxious. He was allowed neither mail nor newspapers. He had no idea what was going on in the outside world, and he fretted.

There were times when he regretted the lost hopes, the lost promises of his young, vigorous manhood, when he cursed the mine in the Hoodoos—the Yankee Doodle Glory which was at the bottom of all his troubles. But he controlled himself with a will. He could not afford to break down, for there was the girl he loved, the girl he must get out of the German Eagle's clutches—and so he waited, waited, for the court-martial summons.

At times he asked General Unruh, who shrugged his shoulders.

"Lieutenant Graves," he said, smiling with his lips, "never in all my long experience as fortress prison commander have I seen anybody as anxious to stand trial as you. You must be very certain that you are going to get off scot-free!"

"Well—but when *will* they try me?"

"Can't say, I'm sure. You will have to compose yourself in patience."

And Tom did.

Very few visitors were allowed near him, and these only in the presence of the General or some other high-ranking officer. The little Ensign came. Too, von Quitzow, and one or two others. They muttered banalities and went on their way. No—they said, one and all—they had not seen a sign of Miss Wedekind. The Ensign understood that she was down with severe illness; nobody was allowed near her.

And Tom waited, week after week, for the court-martial summons that did not come. He had an idea that they were trying to break his nerve, and he gritted his teeth and forced himself to be quiet.

Outside, late winter changed suddenly into early spring. Green leaves of crocus and tulip peeped out overnight in the cement-framed grass plot next to General Unruh's quarters. The song birds returned from the South. The trees were clad in the delicate tracery of the new foliage. Even the drab, square Julius Tower that was said to house Prussia's mysterious golden war chest, was touched and softened by lacy sprays of color where ivy and vine crept up from the sandy Brandenburg soil.

Thus May passed with soft winds and the virginal pink of hawthorn blossoms, and June came, with the first crass heat of summer, with the sunset sky of summer that was like a great, tropical moth, crimson and orange, its wings barred with black when a thunderstorm boomed overland all the way from the chilly, foggy Baltic.

And still he waited, with no word from Bertha, no summons to the court-martial that should decide his fate and hers.

Every evening he paced up and down the cement walk in front of the prison wing, between armed soldiers. The rest of the day he spent at his window, looking out over the fortifications that dipped into the ground like gopher holes, suddenly, threateningly, where a sunken gun emplacement frowned its unseen challenge, farther on, to the east, flattened out into an immense, gray, dusty drill ground; and as the days passed into the cycle of weeks, this drill ground was used more and more. Nervous and swarming it was, like a beehive.

Not only were the artillery men busy with the limbers and the steel thills of their gray-and-blue field guns, but also with sappers and cavalry and infantry. Wherever Tom looked, miniature battles were in progress.

All one morning a dozen heaped batteries practiced drum fire with blank shells until Tom thought his ears would burst under the roar and slam and clank of the continuous salvos, wailing as the shells left the barrels and rushed on, madly crashing as they thumped down to their targets. The same at night, varied by star shells, flashing and vanishing in an intolerable orange haze, leaping and flickering up, then down, then along the ground in a gamut of flame. And again the deafening sequence of shells, overlapping, stretching into one unceasing roar, throbbing to the firmament like a gigantic drum, with triangular sheets of white, brilliant light flaring to the zenith, and countless projectiles rushing through the air with a noise as the tearing of silk.

Or a sudden, terrible silence—more terrible than the inferno of sounds that had preceded it—and a young officer's voice, high, shrill, foolish, frightfully inadequate:

"Battery! Over there!"

A non-commissioned officer's echoing voice:

"Zu Befehl, Herr Leutnant!"

And once more the latter's order: "Barrage! Ten rounds gun fire! Fire—fire!"—and the crash, the roar, the whining and wailing of tortured steel smiting tortured earth.

The drum fire over, platoons of infantry or dismounted cavalry would be put through their paces. During his months in the army Tom had taken part in maneuvers and military reviews and was more or less familiar with the surface of ordinary tactics. But the drill which he watched day after day from his window was new to him.

At times, indeed, the old traditional Prussian formation, the attack by massed phalanx, grenadiers charging, shoulder to shoulder, relying on brawn and weight to crush the enemy's opposition regardless of the cost in blood to their own men, was followed. But at other times the lines were deployed, in a thin loop, very much—Tom thought—as Western range riders spread, fan-like, when cattle stampede.

Scouts these, the nerves of the army. Then another barrage, plopping and splashing unexpectedly in a screen of fire that melted from scarlet and gold to livid purple, and specially picked troops—he heard General Unruh call them *Stosstruppen,* shock troops —were sent forward, without rifle or bayonet, armed instead with trench knife and hand grenade, fused for instant action.

Over and over again they would be hurled forth. Drill was incessant, discipline even more merciless than usual. Men who fell from exhaustion were kicked and cuffed and belted by the non-coms while the officers turned their heads, pretending not to see.

No newspaper correspondents, no photographers, no civilians of any sort were allowed near the parade ground; and the troops that were trained did not remain the same. They changed every few days. On a Monday it would be the *Maikäfer* Grenadiers, forty-eight hours later the First Mecklenburg Regiment of Foot, again East Prussian fusiliers, until it seemed that the whole North Germany army corps were passing through the Spandau mill.

Formerly Tom would have smiled. But not now.

Formerly he would have said to himself that the German army was only the glitter, the vanity, the imagination of the nation concretely realized in color and pomp, very much like a cowboy who swaggers into town, his chaps dyed a violent vermilion. But now he saw the army as a working body, a pitiless, never-resting machine, and at times his thoughts swerved away from the figures, drilling out there in the heat and dust, and winged to the German homes; the homes where these men must have been born and bred. Puppets they were, puppets of an armed, rasping, insolent, ruling caste. But they had women and children; mothers and sisters and sweethearts.

And what were these women thinking? What were they doing? Were they entirely inarticulate, like Siwash squaws? And what, then, of civilization, and progress, and culture, and Christianity?

Thus Tom pondered—Tom, who was simple no more. He asked himself what it was all about, and he was afraid of finding the answer.

Still the days passed, with no news from Bertha, no summons to court-martial, until one Saturday morning the General came to his room and told him that a visitor was there to see him.

"Mrs. Wedekind. Colonel Wedekind's mother."

A minute later the General left, and the sentry ushered Mrs. Wedekind in. It was fortunate for Tom that the officer on watch that day, the officer ordered to listen to the conversation between the prisoner and his callers and to make a detailed report of it to the proper authorities, was the *Junker,* von Quitzow, who had been forced into the Uhlan tunic by his father and who had never really quite forgotten his native good-humor and sentimentality—"damned civilian sentimentality" Tom one day had heard the Colonel characterize it.

Mrs. Wedekind was close to the Biblical span of years. White haired she was, and wrinkled. But in her youth she had loved, very deeply, she had had her beautiful summer, and when her husband had died in his prime, her heart, instead of becoming blunted, had mellowed, had become receptive. She drew people to her, instinctively. Added to this was a great, slightly malicious, natural shrewdness, a wonderful charm of manner, a knowledge of man's vulnerable spots.

This knowledge, this charm and shrewdness, she used now on Captain von Quitzow.

She flashed a rapid look from her canny old eyes at Tom. But she shook hands first with the *Junker.*

"Ah, guten Morgen, mein liebster Herr Hauptmann! It has been such a long time since I have seen you, since I had the pleasure of listening to your charming music. Why, my dear, they call you the Richard Wagner of the Uhlans! They do, positively. When will you come and play for me? Or—am I too old, perhaps, for a dashing young Captain like yourself?"

Dashing! Tom hid a smile. That was the one thing which von Quitzow was not, but he took the bait, blushed, mumbled something, and bowed deep

over Mrs. Wedekind's right hand while she, at the same fraction of a moment, passed a tiny envelope to Tom. He slipped it up his sleeve.

Then came a banal conversation, lasting several minutes, at the end of which Mrs. Wedekind rose, shook hands with both men and went to the door.

"Thanks for having come," said Tom. "You don't know when my court-martial's going to come off, do you?"

Mrs. Wedekind looked straight at him.

"Lieutenant Graves," she replied, "I have no idea. But at times I imagine that the Prussian army just now is too—ah—busy to waste precious days on such an altogether charming and altogether worthless young American like yourself!" And she swept out with an old-fashioned curtsy, followed by the still blushing von Quitzow, who had not caught the peculiar inflection of her parting speech.

Tom had. But he had no time to think about it right then. For there was the envelope which she had given him.

He tore it open, took out a slip of paper, read.

There were just a few lines, from Bertha.

"I am waiting, waiting!" she wrote. "Waiting for you! Come to me, dear. I need you. I want you. Every night I pray for you. Bertha."

That was all. But Tom kissed the letter. He felt a hot tear running down his cheek, and he was not ashamed of it.

Late that evening, and again the next morning, Mrs. Wedekind's words came back to him . . . "The army just now is too busy to waste precious days on you!"

Directly bordering on the military prison was the

mess barrack of the gunner officers. Heretofore, every night, the great banqueting hall had been silent and dark. The officers had been busy day and night, had snatched food on the run, to return, often past midnight, to their quarters and sleep the dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion. But to-night the room was festively lit. Around nine o'clock officers entered the building, and, an hour later, a banquet was in full swing.

The windows had been thrown wide open, and very distinctly Tom could hear the popping of champagne corks, voices, laughter, the clinking of glass, once in a while the band thumping and scraping and braying a martial rhythm—playing the old favorites of the German army: *"Maria Teresa, geh' nicht in den Krieg!" "Der alte Derflinger," "Lützows wilde, verwegene Jagd!"* and many others.

Then there was a silence and, after a minute, somebody giving a toast. Tom heard a few words:

"The army is ready, *meine Herren Offiziere!* Ready to conquer . . ."

Then somebody closed the windows of the banquet hall and Tom heard no more except vague, indistinct sounds. But he was nervous. He paced up and down.

War?

He shook his head.

He was no more the provincial American, isolated in the valor of his ignorance. During the last months he had read the newspapers, the foreign news, the editorials. He knew that the German nation was nervous, fretful, on tenter-hooks, that a change had come over it.

But . . . War?

War, bloodshed, without rhyme or reason?

And there was no reason. He had followed the news of the world. No, no! War would not come. Could, must not come! It was out of the question.

Yet again the next morning, Sunday, when Tom, escorted by von Quitzow, went to hear service in the *Garnisonskirche,* the cantonment church, Mrs. Wedekind's strange words came back to him . . . And, too, other words: Vyvyan's, Martin Wedekind's, the Emperor's, the little professor's.

The church was crowded with officers. Doctor Stöckl, the Kaiser's favorite, was in the pulpit.

He had taken the sixteenth chapter of Revelations for his text:

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. . . ."

Later on:

"The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great River Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the Kings of the East might be prepared. . . ."

The clergyman looked up.

"The Kings of the East, brethren," he went on, "the Kings of the East! Our Emperor! The Emperor of Austria-Hungary! The Sultan of Turkey! The three Kings out of the East. . . ."

Tom stopped his ears. He was not a religious man, but he had the fine, instinctive antipathy of the man of the open range against blasphemy.

The clergyman droned on. Tom could hear his voice as from a great distance, vague, wiped over. He could not make out the words.

But he saw the faces of the officers.

They seemed utterly fascinated, utterly enwrapt.

CHAPTER XXXVII

VIEW-HALLOO

JUNE swung to its end with a great, brassy avalanche of heat, the sudden heat of North Prussia that, reflected by the Brandenburg sand dunes as by a glacier, dried up the trees and grasses and caused the very birds to open their beaks and gasp for air.

Cooped up in his room the greater part of the day, Tom felt the heat badly. All his life he had taken a great deal of physical exercise, mostly on horseback, and the confinement, in spite of the daily evening stroll, began to tell on him. Physically, not mentally, for he knew that he must bear up.

Impatient he was when, as the days passed, there was no more news from Bertha except an occasional word from Ensign von Königsmark that he had seen her drive down Unter den Linden, in a carriage, hedged in on either side by her uncle and her aunt.

Nor was he summoned to court-martial. Forgotten he seemed by the whole world.

Outside, on the dusty Spandau drill ground, the troops were still at their eternal training, running, leaping, charging, shooting, sweating, the officers cursing the non-coms, the latter passing on the compliment, plus kicks, to the privates. The work was feverish, incessant.

Even Captain von Quitzow, who was now altogether

stationed at Spandau, heavy, sentimental though he was, caught something of the hectic spirit that swirled about him in unhealthy, braggart waves, and one day, as he was talking to Tom, his enthusiasm got the best of his discretion.

"You will see, Lieutenant Graves," he said, pointing out of the window where the sun rays danced on innumerable bayonets, "when all is ready we will blow them to hell—*poof!*—just like that!" making a clumsy, brutal gesture with his great, red, hairy fist.

"Whom? The French? What have they done to you?"

"Say—Us! You are one of us!"

"Wait until after the court-martial," laughed Tom. "But you haven't answered. Whom are you threatening with that dainty little paw of yours?"

"Anybody! Everybody!"

"Meaning?"

"Anybody who envies us our riches, our culture, our civilization, our trade, our progress, our achievement! All those foreign nations who hate us, who try to put stumbling-blocks into the path of our natural development!" He had learned the words somewhere, like a parrot, and he believed in their wisdom, their justice and truth, implicitly, with all his top-heavy Teuton soul. "Everybody wants to hurt us Germans!" he added, half plaintively, half defiantly.

"Ah—cut it out! Nobody wants to hurt you. You are only hurting yourselves. The world at large is too busy looking after its own affairs, von Quitzow."

"Well—perhaps. But just the same—we are ready" —and again he quoted from some unknown authority —"with every gill of red fighting blood, with every bolt and nut and wheel of war machinery, with every howitzer and caisson, with every Zeppelin and air-

plane, with every haversack and *sabretache!* With every last ounce of strength and discipline and efficiency and patriotism! We will hurl it all, all into the finishing fight!"

Tom laughed.

"Cut out the Fourth of July dope," he said, "it's got whiskers," but, secretly, his uneasiness increased.

Towards the end of that week, watching from his window as usual, he was surprised to see a generous sprinkling of strange uniforms amongst those of the Germans.

There were some tall, very slight men, with peaked, coquettish caps, short, tight white tunics braided profusely with gold, and high lacquered riding-boots. Others in tailed, bottle-green jackets with leather shorts and leggings, and bow-legged cavalrymen in black with bright orange plastrons. Still others were olive complexioned men, very silent, with beady eyes, high cheek bones, and a long, swaggering stride. They were mostly dressed in black. Black, too, was the frogging and the fur on their tunics, black their tall, fur caps. Still others were short men, extremely broad and heavy, gnarled looking like peasants, in light blue uniforms with a great deal of vermilion and silver.

"Austrians," explained von Quitzow when Tom appealed to him, "also Turks and Bulgarians."

"Why," smiled the Westerner, "if you're so all-fired set on fighting all the world, what's the big idea of putting all these foreign ginks wise to your military preparations?"

The Captain raised a didactic hand.

"They are our friends, our brothers-in-arms. Their sovereigns are the friends of His All-Gracious Majesty the Kaiser."

"Seems to be hard up for friends," mumbled the irrepressible Tom.

Thus Tom composed his soul in peace, until one day (and afterwards he could never quite explain why he did it; perhaps it was a calling, calling back to the range life, the free life, the zest and sweep and tang of the open; perhaps it was an overpowering desire to see Bertha, to speak to her, to make sure that she was all right; perhaps it was the suggestion of the saddled horse which had stopped directly beneath his window)—until one day his patience snapped, suddenly, jarringly.

It had been another day of maneuvering, charges and counter-charges, the *phutt-phutt* of machine guns, the deeper notes of great guns and trench mortars warming up to the task.

A regiment of cavalry had been thrown into the iron game. They came on, straight, lances at the carry, thundering across the heat-baked drill ground. They rode mostly new mounts, not yet broken to the roll and sob of the guns, and many reared, bucked, plunged, threw their riders and danced on, fretting, foaming, mad, in all directions.

There was one horse in particular—a great, black half-hunter with broad back and streaming tail. A stout General was riding it, spurring and whipping it on brutally. Tom was watching from the window of his room with his keen eyes.

He was anxious—more for the horse, than for the man. He clenched his fists.

"Stop, you fool!" he said under his breath. "Leave those spurs be! That isn't the way . . ."

Then there was a cry, followed by shouts, yells, hectic words of warning. The half-hunter, maddened

to frenzy, took the bit between its teeth, sailed along like a ship under canvas, cleared at a magnificent jump a shiny, blue-gray gun barrel, and threw its rider, head foremost, amongst the caissons.

More cries. Then a voice:

"Lieber Himmel! Der Prinz!"

And Tom knew. The rider was Prinz Ludwig Karl of Hohenzollern, cousin to the Emperor, and he was not surprised at the excitement which followed.

A staff officer blew a whistle. A trumpet called. Everybody ran to the spot where the Prince lay prostrate. The war game was forgotten. Even the sentry outside Tom's room rushed out and away.

Tom, half turning, saw him run down the hall as fast as he could. The next moment, turning back to the window, he saw directly beneath it the Prince's horse standing there, trembling in every limb, great brown eyes half-glazed with fright and pain, saddle slipped a little to one side.

And Tom thought and acted in a fraction of a second.

Out of the room! Down the hall! Past the outer sentry, who saw nothing but a flash of blue and crimson uniform!

Quickly his hands busied themselves with the saddle girth. The saddle came off—and Tom was up and away!

Nobody paid any attention to him. They were crowding around the Prince, and Tom, on horseback, was the Tom he had been on his native range—master of himself, the animal, the dust and stones that flew away to right and left as the horse, feeling the rider's softly strong hand, hearing his caressing voice, leaped on with a great gathering of speed—on to Berlin!

All afternoon and evening Tom rode. It was around midnight when he turned into the outer suburbs, and it was then that a realization of his desperate position came to him.

The Web!

He remembered Vyvyan's words.

And what did the Web want of him—stretching, knitting, crushing, looping . . . ?

His property, his mine, the Yankee Doodle Glory, for whatever mysterious reasons?

Why, they had that. They had cheated him out of it. The meshes of the Web were about it, tightly, crushingly, like the slimy, merciless arms of a giant octopus.

And what else did the Web want?

Tom gave a bitter laugh. He knew. No use trying to fool himself.

His life!

That was the stake!

Well—he'd fight for it!

They had tried to get him by every means in their power. They had not even stopped short of murder, for there was that duel—the Baron's shot before the umpire's word to fire. He had fooled them and, by God! he'd fool them again.

But how? What could he do? To whom could he turn?

If before he had been in danger of his life, he was doubly so now. For now he was an outlaw. He had committed the worst crime on the Prussian military calendar. Everybody's hand would be against his.

And—who *could* help him?

Bertha? Old Mrs. Wedekind?

No! That wasn't his sort of a game. He could not compromise women, endanger them.

Vyvyan? Was away.

The man with the silver ring? That, too, was hopeless. By this time the Spandau authorities would know of his get-away, and the British Embassy, judging from his former experience, was the very place they would watch most carefully.

Poole? The man would faint of fright, would not lift his little finger to help him.

He had not a cent in his pockets, nothing but the uniform. Not even his saber, which had been taken away from him at the time of his arrest. And an officer without his sword was an object of suspicion. He might be able to get into communication with McCaffrey. The barkeeper was sure to lend him clothes and money. Here was his chance to get out of Germany.

And then he thought of Bertha. Without her he could not leave the country. Could not. Would not!

What then?

The first thing to do would be to get rid of his horse. So he turned west, back to the beginning of the Spandau road, dismounted, and slapped the animal smartly across the withers. Silently he prayed that the horse might be a "homer," the sort that, allowed to travel free, makes straight for the accustomed stable, not to forget the accustomed oats.

"Thank God!" he whispered, as the horse whinnied softly, and was off to the west, towards Spandau, at an easy, graceful canter.

On foot Tom returned to the suburbs, crossed them, reached the Westend.

Then the courage of despair came to him. Also memories.

Back home, in the West, when he had been a boy, there had been a famous Bad Man, Silvertongue

Charley by name. Charley had not killed very often. His argument had usually been more mild, yet more subtle, more persuasive, and (Tom laughed suddenly) somehow it would be appreciated in Germany, for here they fought with the same weapon—as in the case of Martin and Bertha Wedekind.

He walked on, turned into the Dahlmann Strasse, and rang the night bell of the Colonel's apartment.

The door was opened, he walked upstairs, and the sleepy *Bursche* let him in.

"I want to speak to the Colonel, at once. Most important," he snarled.

"Zu Befehl, Herr Leutnant!"

The *Bursche* left, and Tom looked rapidly about him. He needed a weapon.

There was the Colonel's writing-desk. He tried drawer after drawer until finally he found what he wanted—a heavy cavalry revolver. He made sure that it was loaded.

The next moment the Colonel came in, dressed in pajamas and slippers.

His first word was a curse, a terrible threat:

"What d'you mean, Lieutenant Graves? *Himmeldonnerwetter!* Who let you out of *Festung?* Who . . ."

"Shut up!" drawled Tom, and up came his gun to emphasize the command. "No, no!" as the Colonel was about to bluster again, "this time I hold the winning ace—and I'm going to rake in the pot. I tell you what you are going to do. You are going to dress, under my supervision. You are going to give me all the money in the house, call Bertha, very gently, without waking up the rest of the household, and then you are going to accompany both of us downstairs, enter a taxicab, drive with us to the station. There

Bertha is going to buy the tickets. A private compartment, for the frontier, see?"

"But . . ."

"Didn't I tell you to shut up, you bastard?" Tom took a firmer hold on his gun. "I'm going to be right close to you straight through. We'll walk arm in arm, ride arm in arm, and, by God! eat arm in arm—and you'll always feel this little bit of steel pressing into your ribs. Nobody'll know. That big silver-gray uniform cape of mine—and yours—will hide that part all right, all right. And—no fooling—my finger itches. I've got a peculiar disease called Trigger-fingeritis where I was raised. Get me, don't you? Now—lead on! First we'll go to your room and have you dressed for the slaughter."

Tom's argument was persuasive. Silently, without saying a word, without making an unnecessary gesture, the Colonel preceded him to his dressing-room, arm in arm with him, on the way, obeying the pressure of the revolver, telling the *Bursche* to go back to bed, and put on his uniform.

"Now we'll call Bertha," Tom went on. "Where is her room?"

"Over there." The Colonel pointed.

"All right." Tom pressed the revolver into the small of the other's back. "Call her. Be careful what you say. If this is somebody else's room, God help you!"

"Bertha, Bertha," whispered the Colonel, and then, a little louder: "Oh, Bertha!"

"Yes, Uncle?" came a sleepy voice.

"Come here a moment."

There was a rustle of clothes and a few seconds later Bertha appeared, in a loose dressing-robe, her hair a curly, unruly, shimmering mass.

She was still half asleep.

"What is the matter?" Then, seeing Tom: "Why —Tom . . . ?"

"No time to explain," replied the Westerner. "You've got to get into your clothes quickly. Throw some things into a bag. We're going to take a little trip . . ."

"A little trip?"

"Yes. To the French frontier. The three of us. They kidnapped you, those darned Dutchmen, held you as a hostage, eh? Well, two can play at the same game, by Ginger, and . . ."

Very suddenly the Colonel twisted and turned, was about to shout for help, and Tom brought up his gun.

"No, you don't!" he said in a low, minatory voice. "Look out. This thing's going to go off sure!"

And then, just as he was about to fire: "Oh, my God!"

For the Colonel, agile in spite of his weight, had rapidly shifted his position, had picked up Bertha, was holding her against his breast, like a shield.

Wedekind laughed.

"Shoot, why don't you?"

"I— God da—"

"Don't swear in the presence of a lady," sneered the German. "The winning card? Have you? I am afraid you have been a little too previous." He raised his voice to a shout: "Franz! Franz!" he called the *Bursche*. "Come in here—no, wait—bring the janitor with you and a couple of other stout fellows. Bring some ropes, too, while you're about it. We've got a wild American in here."

And, five minutes later, when Tom was stretched on the leather couch in the Colonel's study, tied, helpless, the German said:

"I don't think you'll be so very wild in the future. You're going to be as quiet as a mouse. For you're going to be dead. This thing is going to be finished in a hurry. Court-martial to-morrow. And a firing squad the day after. Good night! Sweet dreams!"

And Tom *did* sleep, like the simple, fearless man he was. He had done his best, had tried to do his best, for the girl he loved, for Martin Wedekind, for Vyvyan, for himself.

He had failed. The odds had been too great.

He, alone, had fought the Web.

And the Web had won. . . .

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE COLONEL'S PROPOSAL

THERE was no doubt of the verdict from the moment Tom entered the large, gray court-room of the *Kriegsgericht,* armed guards on either side and an officer with drawn saber walking ahead, straight through the Captain Prosecutor's indictment, the hearing of the witnesses all telling the same tale, his refusal to avail himself of the services of a *Kriegsgerichtadvokat,* a military lawyer, his refusal even to answer a single one of the questions put to him by the Captain Prosecutor and the three Generals who acted as judges, to the moment when the presiding judge, General von Kanitz, rose, put on his helmet, and announced with a clear voice that defendant was guilty of insubordination, killing a brother officer in a duel, breaking out of *Festung,* insulting a superior officer, threatening him with death, and trying to kidnap him.

The punishment, according to the Prussian Military Law Code, paragraph 578, reënforced by paragraphs 789 and 452, and doubly reënforced by paragraphs 661, 107 and 322, was—Death!

The times being what they were, the enemy beyond the frontier preparing for war, the General went on, defendant must show cause at once for reopening the case or setting aside the judgment or registering an appeal.

Defendant shook his head.

Furthermore, continued the General, defendant had the right to beg His All-Gracious Majesty the Kaiser for a reprieve . . .

"Quite useless!" cut in the Captain Prosecutor.

"Order, order!" cried the General.

And then Tom, for the first time since he had entered the court-room, opened his lips. He spoke—in good, plain American:

"I agree with the Prosecutor," he said. "You just bet your boots I do. Why," looking straight at the presiding judge, "you damned sanctimonious humbugs with your talk of reprieve—forget it! Cut it out! You've railroaded me!"

Officers rushed up to him, threatening, waving sabers, ordering him to be silent, but he went right on, raising his voice clear above the turmoil:

"Yep! You've cooked up the whole thing, you saber-rattling, cowardly coyotes! I'm not fool enough to kick against the impossible—I'd have less chance than a hog on ice!"

And he turned on his heels, and marched out between the armed guards.

All that afternoon, half through the night, he paced up and down the stone-flagged floor of his cell.

Death—in the morning!

A firing squad! The end of his life, his youth, his ambition, his love!

The final gift of the Hoodoos—rightly named, he thought.

There was nothing vainglorious, nothing romantic about Tom Graves. But he said to himself that he would die like a man. He'd be true to his traditions, his ancestors, his country—true to his love.

Finally he fell asleep, and it was the rattle of the keys in the steel door that startled him into wakefulness.

Haggard rays of sunlight were filtering in through the window high up on the wall—well—he shrugged his shoulders—soon there would be darkness. The fight was over.

"All right. I'm all ready for the last act," he said as the door opened.

Then he drew back in surprise. He had expected armed sentries commanded by a Captain. But only two men came in: Colonel Wedekind, accompanied by Ensign Baron von Königsmark who, note-book and pencil ready to hand, was evidently acting as the former's secretary.

"What's up?" asked Tom. "Going to court-martial me all over again? You can only murder me once, you know."

Then he gave a cry of utter amazement. For the Colonel smiled. He shook Tom's hand.

"Guten Morgen, Herr Leutnant!" he said affably.

And, before Tom knew what to say, the German went on:

"Well, did the confinement and the court-martial cool your hot blood a little?"

"Cut out the heavy sarcasm," replied Tom. "It isn't your line."

"Sarcasm? Not a bit of it. Only—" he smiled, "I do believe that loneliness, confinement, and a good scare is the best medicine in the world for an impatient young cavalier like you. And now—" he motioned to the Ensign, who at once got busy with note-book and pencil, taking down the words, "Lieutenant Graves!"

"Well?" asked Tom, who knew less than ever what

to make of the other's ingratiating manner. "What's up? Can it be that you've conscience troubles and that you're sorry for that bit of—oh—Montana justice you pulled off yesterday in the court-martial? Hang your prisoner first, and try him afterwards?"

"No, no," Wedekind went on in the same affable, half-playful manner. "I have a proposition to make to you, and I wish you would think about it very seriously. In fact, I am sure you will not say no."

"Don't you count your chickens before they're hatched—every darned, fluffy one of 'em," drawled the Westerner.

"Ah!" smiled the Colonel. "I see that you have kept your old jesting mood, even in the face of death. Charming, perfectly charming, my dear sir!"

"Well?"

Something caused Tom to look at the Ensign. His head was bent over the note-book, his pencil busily scratching. But there was something in the boy's attitude, in the vivid blush that mantled his forehead, which convinced Tom that he was uneasy. Perhaps he was ashamed of the Colonel's suave, hypocritical manner. Perhaps he knew that the latter had set some artfully prepared trap, had knotted another noose in the Web.

All right. He would be careful, decided Tom, and he looked inquiringly at Wedekind, who continued:

"I am speaking in the name of the army, the Government, the Emperor himself. We are willing to—*na, sagen wir 'mal*—squash all these disagreeable court-martial proceedings against you. We are even willing to accept your resignation from the army with honor, and to pay you liberally, more than liberally, for the Yankee Doodle Glory."

"Gosh! What's the use of paying for a thing after

you've swiped it?" interrupted Tom sarcastically, but the other went on unheeding:

"We will even pay you an extra bonus and confer upon you the Order *Pour Le Mérite* of the second class. For one condition!"

"Shoot it!"

"We need your help."

"Well? Go on. Don't be so mysterious!"

"Oh, there's nothing mysterious about it. All we want of you is to have you transfer, in your name, to American flag and registry a certain line of fast freighters running between Tacoma and Hamburg . . . though," he corrected himself, "perhaps the port of destination won't always be Hamburg. It may change to some other port."

Tom looked up. He remembered Martin Wedekind's letter. The thing puzzled him. He could not imagine why it should be so hard to find somebody in the United States, most likely a German-American, who would be willing to play cat's-paw for the German Government, and he said something of the sort.

"Why pick on me?" he asked. "The woods are full of people ready to earn a dishonest penny."

The Colonel winked at him in a manner that said, more plainly than words, that Tom knew more than he tried to make believe.

"Lieutenant Graves," he replied, "I'll put my cards on the table, face up. The British Government does not want these ships to get to their destination. They are suspicious, thanks to your friend Vyvyan. But the very fact that you are Vyvyan's friend will disarm their suspicions, and we will make assurance doubly sure by changing the ships' names, by making one or two other small changes. In fact, we have already done so."

"Oh? Pretty sure I would accept, eh?"

The Colonel smiled.

"My dear sir, remember the firing squad. Of course I am sure!"

Tom was thinking rapidly. Suddenly he smiled to himself. He considered that more than one can play at the ancient game of double cross.

"Colonel," he said, "I have half a mind to close on that deal . . ."

"Delighted, delighted, my dear sir!" Wedekind rose. He was pleasurably excited. Fervently he shook Tom's hands. "Why, it's splendid. *Ganz famos!* Of course we will all be sorry to see you leave Germany. But it will be for your own best interests. Why—everybody likes you here. Only this morning Baron von Götz-Wrede told me that you . . ."

The words were out. He could not choke them back.

There was a pall of utter silence, broken by Tom's incredulous:

"Von Götz-Wrede? I thought he was dead!"

"Let me explain, my dear sir," the Colonel cut in, clumsily. "The Baron . . ."

"A frame-up, eh?" continued Tom, icily. "A dirty, stinking trick to get me, eh?"

"No, no! Please let me explain. I will . . ."

"Lieutenant Graves is right!"

It was the little Ensign speaking. All during the interview he had felt in his inner conscience the pitiless Prussian discipline fighting against a fierce desire to blurt out the truth whatever the consequences.

And he did so now, with a sort of hot, angry boyishness:

"I am sorry, Colonel," he said. "I am afraid I am

not a very good officer, perhaps not even a very good Prussian. I am one of those terribly unsatisfactory people whose soul and brain are half the time at odds. I can't help it." He turned to the Westerner. "Yes. You are right. The whole thing was a trap!"

Tom was staring straight at the Colonel.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" he asked thickly; and he was absolutely unprepared for the man's serene, merry, joyous arrogance.

"Nothing, my dear sir. The cat's out of the bag. I admit it. I did it acting under orders, for the sake of the Fatherland. But"—with a gesture, as if brushing aside a regrettable, but wholly negligible fact—"it doesn't matter. It doesn't change the main question under discussion. You accept my proposal?"

"Yesterday you were all for a firing squad!"

"Yes, yes—but—something has happened, conditions have changed. You accept?"

Tom looked at him with something like admiration for the man's colossal, brutal, sprawling insolence. His own wits were at fever heat. Only one thing mattered—to regain his own liberty, his very life, to help Bertha get out of the country and, if possible, to frustrate the German designs, whatever they were, in connection with the line of ships, with the mine.

"All right," he said, "the joke's on me."

"That's the spirit," from the Colonel. "And my little proposition?"

"It's O. K. for me . . . On one condition!"

Wedekind wagged a coquettish finger.

"I know your condition, my dear sir, and I regret I cannot comply with it. You want to take my niece back to America with you. Impossible! I do not mean—well—to seem to doubt you. But I am in the habit of playing safe. As long as Bertha is in Ger-

many, I have a lever on your emotions, my dear sir. You will be afraid to—pardon me—try to deceive us. No, no! I know your condition!"

The Colonel had been right in his guess. But Tom had not been a poker expert for nothing. Before this, about to play a pat hand, he had suddenly changed his mind and bought cards after watching the other man's draw.

That's what he did now.

"You're wrong, Colonel," he said. "I am fond of your niece. I don't deny it. But her returning to America with me wasn't the condition I want to make. You see, I do not want to return to America myself."

"What? You . . ."

"Sure. Don't you understand?" Tom's voice came strong and clear and sincere. "I like Germany. I am mad about the army, the uniform, the chance to see a bit of a bully old scrap. I guess, horses apart, I haven't been much good as an officer in the past. But I'll try my darnedest in the future, Colonel. Give me another chance. Let me stick to Germany and the Uhlans! That's my condition!"

Tom had succeeded beyond his hopes. The Colonel shook his hands again and again, pump-handle fashion.

"Grossartig! Kolossal!" he bellowed. "I shall speak of it to His All-Gracious Majesty. The Fatherland needs men such as you. Why"—with a severe side glance at the little Ensign—"you can set an example in patriotism to many a native-born Prussian." He clicked his heels and saluted. "I thank you in the name of the Uhlans, in the name of the army, the name of the Emperor. And now—let's go back to business—your condition is accepted."

He drew some papers from his pocket. Tom read through them. They were an official bill of sale of

six ten-thousand-ton ships, the *Walla Walla, Seattle, Carson City, Salt Lake City, Santa Rosa* and *Denver,* all built in American yards, from the Hamburg-American Line to one Tom Graves, a citizen of the United States. Another paper agreed to the transfer of these same ships to American registry.

Tom looked up, pen in hand. He remember Poole's repeated protests that he had lost his citizenship by donning the blue and crimson of the Uhlans. He said something of the kind.

"Sure that's all right? It says here that I am an American citizen."

The Colonel smiled.

"Our army has many experts," he said. "They are not all experts with the sword. Some are . . ."

"Experts with the pen. I get you. Experts at forgery. Well—here goes!" and the Westerner signed both papers with a firm hand, at the same time reading again the names of the ships. He did not mean to forget them.

Once more the Colonel shook hands.

"You will be released at once," he said. "Back with your old regiment."

"Any chance of seeing Bertha?"

"To be sure. You may call. But—you understand . . ."

"You bet. I won't be allowed to see her alone. That's all right."

Tom smiled when he was again by himself.

He had accomplished one thing. He was a free man once more, with a free man's chance—the chance to take Bertha away from Germany, home to America.

Only one thing puzzled him.

How would he be able to communicate to Lord

Vyvyan the names of certain ships that had recently changed names, flags, and ownership?

Why there was the little silver ring with the letters *B. E. D.*

CHAPTER XXXIX

B. E. D.

THAT afternoon, it was the second of July, a little over five weeks before the Germans tore up the Scrap of Paper and plunged the world into a cauldron of blood, Tom Graves was free once more.

At the door he was met by Baron von Götz-Wrede, whose right wrist had healed and whose left was still in a sling, and who acted as if nothing out of the way had happened, as if the whole episode, from the original insult to his faked-up death, had been nothing but an amiable idiosyncrasy—on the Westerner's part, well understood. He told Tom that all officers' private residence permits had been canceled.

"You'll have to live at barracks with the rest of us, old fellow. The army is frightfully busy, putting a polish on itself."

"I know."

The other had spoken the truth, and Tom was aware of it. It was not because he was under suspicion that he had to move his traps to a bare ten-by-twelve square of cement, varnished wood, and iron cot in the Uhlan barracks. For all the other officers lived there too, from the Colonel down to the youngest Ensign just gazetted from the Lichterfelde Cadets School. Drill was continuous, pitiless, as he had watched it from his window at Spandau. Long, dusty

rides in the morning. Knock off at noon for a bite, followed by lance and saber drill. Then special instruction in various subjects, examinations in French, map making, and kindred topics. More drill until supper time, and nearly every night, after taps, a final lecture by picked, spectacled Staff officers on the technique and tactics of war.

There was little time even for talk. Yet, underlying the silent, steady, harsh grinding, Tom caught the faint note of terrible, bitter excitement, the stinking, sulphurous smoke of a hidden combustion soon to leap into crimson and orange flame, a suppressed sucking and roaring and belching like an underground furnace driven by some gigantic, artificial draught. The very air of the barrack yard seemed surcharged with an elemental, brutal activity that was intense, inexhaustible, tragic.

Hectic whispers rose at times from groups of officers—whispers that were yearning, again pleading, again, with ferocious suddenness, stabbing to a savage, insupportable note, like the expectant, hysterical cries of worshipers at a bloody shrine about to behold the pomp of some dreadful, mysterious ceremonial. Eager to see it. Yet afraid.

They were like so many machines, these Prussian officers about him, like piece goods turned out of a racial sweat-shop. Yet, somehow, very subtly, they preserved their individuality, though trying to hide it, as if ashamed. It was in their faces, their expressions, as they listened to the Staff officers' instructions.

Colonel Wedekind would look straight ahead, his square, ruddy face composed into angular lines, like those of a vicious Roman Emperor with a touch of Manchu. Baron von Götz-Wrede seemed nervous, yet insolent, forever curling his dark mustache with the

tips of his fingers as if to see that it was still there, as if the martial sweep of it was necessary to his well-being, his soul, his courage. Captain von Quitzow appeared logy, suffused with a heavy, sensuous brutality clumsily overlaid by a glazed, sugary pattern of sentimentality, while others, typical *Junkers* these, listened to the lessons of war without any heated curiosity, like men who were familiar with every word that was being said, yet with distinct sympathy for the seriousness and the efforts of the instructor. Still others seemed to pass through a mental and psychical struggle, a battling with inherent reluctance to do that which was demanded of them, but with the inevitable result that finally the reluctance faded out of them and gave way to redoubled energy, redoubled effort to listen, learn, obey. One young Lieutenant seemed overwrought, on the edge of a nervous breakdown, listening with bated breath, looking at his war teachers with bright, almost too searching, almost too intelligent eyes, while the little Ensign, Baron von Königsmark, showed a pale, childish face, rather glorious and stately in spite of its pitiful youth, wearing a glow, an enthusiastic glow, that came from the soul, the lips compressed, the clear, blue eyes ablaze. Magnificent he seemed, with an air of power, of majesty that was akin to beauty.

Tom watched them—and he paid them the compliment of believing that at least some of them were watching him. So he, too, cultivated a special facial expression for use during hours of military instruction. And it was something distinctly American:—

The Poker Face.

He listened without a muscle or a nerve twitching, not even when, in a snarling, matter-of-fact Prussian voice, one of the instructors propounded and proved

the point that treachery was sound military tactics, adding:

"The idea of war is to win, to beat the enemy, whatever the methods, the ways. It is perfectly proper, when in a tight corner, to use the white flag of surrender as a shield beneath which to return to the attack. It is perfectly proper to hold up your hands, to shout *'Kamerad,'* then to turn on the foe when he enters the trenches to disarm the soldiers. War is not a sport, *meine Herren Offiziere.* War is a grim business. The rules of sport do not apply to it. Win! That's what the War Lord demands of you. Nothing else!"

Leave from the unceasing grind of duty was seldom given, and Tom was circumspect when he had an hour or two for himself. His old range breeding stood him in good stead, his instinct, his second sight of the man used to the noises and furtive trails of the open prairie. Thus he knew that, whenever he was away from barracks, he was being shadowed.

Not that it troubled him. For he had nothing to conceal. Occasionally he called on Bertha, who was never alone, nor with her grandmother, but always with her aunt, a big, hook-nosed, high-colored grenadier of a woman who, had she been English, would have been a horsy, racing, sporting spinster, but who, being a German, subdued her restless, independent intelligence to further her husband's career. She had received certain instructions from the latter in regard to Tom and Bertha, and she obeyed them to the letter, to the very spirit of the letter.

Thus, her English being far from holeproof, she would draw up one heavy, black, majestic eyebrow and tap the floor with her capable feet when Tom switched to his native language.

"Wir sind in Deutschland, Herr Leutnant," would be her invariable comment, and Tom grinned and obeyed.

There was, therefore, nothing except banalities he could talk to the girl, and he hoped that his eyes would tell her the message that was in his soul.

It did not take him long to discover a way by which he might let Lord Vyvyan know the German intentions as to the line of freighters which, with his name as a dummy, had been transferred to American registry after a change of names—"and of other small details," as the Colonel had said. And, later on, thinking about the chain of events, it would strike him as strange, as portentous, as fitting of the new era, that it was a bit of casual, loose American slang, of that typically transatlantic slang which will ever remain an unfathomable secret to the uninitiated, that saved the situation, that, in the final reckoning, perhaps saved the whole world from the iron heel, the soulless efficiency, the blood-stained brutality of Kaiserism, and Prussianism, and Junkerism—from the Trinity of Crime.

It came about in this way.

Tom understood the impossibility, since he was shadowed, of going to the British Embassy and finding there the man who had the duplicate of Vyvyan's ring. His incoming and outgoing mail, too, was sure to be thoroughly scrutinized and examined.

But—there was McCaffrey. There was the blessed slang of the New World.

One day (and he made a point of telling Baron von Götz-Wrede about it) he ordered a saddle from London, enclosing in his letter Bank of England notes which, again in the Baron's presence, he had purchased at the Deutsche Bank.

The Baron saw him slip the notes in the letter and mail it, but he did not notice that Tom palmed two of the crisp, white pound sterling certificates.

That night, in his room, Tom wrote a few words, dealing with the names of certain ships, *Walla Walla, Seattle, Carson City, Salt Lake City, Santa Rosa,* and *Denver,* on a slip of paper a little smaller than the English bank-notes, marked across it in red ink: "For B. E. D.," and pasted the two sterling notes together with the slip of paper between, in such a manner that a tiny edge of it showed above the margin of the notes.

This done, he asked for leave, was granted it, and went over to the "Gross Berlin American Bar," where he bought many rounds of drink for the English and American jockeys and trainers who frequented the place, paying for them at the end of each round.

Finally he bought one more, put his hand in his pocket, and laughed.

"Sorry, Mac," he said, "I'm bust."

"All right. I'll chalk it up, Graves."

"Not on your life. Wait—I have some English money. Take it?"

"Sure," said the barkeeper, and Tom brought out the double Bank of England note.

He looked at it critically. Then he looked at McCaffrey, long, quizzically, with a faint wink in his left eye, faintly, interrogatively returned by his Coney Island compatriot.

"Mac," he drawled, in home slang, "pipe this case note. It's as phoney as a salted mine."

He tossed it across the bar, with another wink, and McCaffrey picked it up and examined it.

"Sure," he said, "it's phoney all right, all right. I don't want it, young feller."

"Nor I. I make you a present of it. Stick some-

body else with it. Say—I tell you what to do. Try and palm it off on one of the guys from the British Embassy. That would be a hell of a joke"—and he winked again.

"You bet." McCaffrey pocketed the note. "I'll do that little thing for you." He turned to the people lined up against the bar. "What'll you have, gents? This one is on the house!"

Tom returned to barracks.

He had risked a long shot. But, somehow, he felt sure that it would hit the target.

CHAPTER XL

WAR!

It came suddenly, over night, crashing like an iron fist into the teeth of the world, the Western world, France, England, Belgium, the United States; the stupid, decent, happy, purblind world that had caviled and jested and thrown the mud of doubt when the chosen amongst its peoples had spoken words of warning, that had branded the seers as liars, the prophets as panicky fools; that had refused to believe what it had feared to believe; that, poisoned with the deliberate propaganda of forty years, refused to believe even now, even after the steely, inexorable fact of War hurled across its frontiers, crashing, roaring, maiming, torturing, killing.

It started with a tense, dramatic whisper that changed, in twenty-four hours, to a savage, clarion call of triumph, as the gray-green hordes trampled the fair fields of Belgium and blackened the crime in the German soul with the blacker crime of the German fist.

It came unrelenting, disdainful, bestial, smashing the standards of the gray, swinging centuries, smashing the God-made, man-made standards of civilization and honesty and decency.

On it came in the rolling boundlessness of crazy ambition, bruiting afar the thunder word of a mad nation, led by a mad Kaiser, reëchoing it from the east to the west of Europe, and beyond, from the

heights of Quebec to the matted jungles of Central Africa.

It wakened the fog-bound cities of the North with the sweep of it.

It chilled the golden-souled cities of the West with the steel of it.

It rolled over the sad marshes of the East like a sheet of smouldering fire, yellow, burning, inexorable.

It thundered against the hope of all the world and killed that hope—with the laughter of Satan, the Cursed, laughing into nothingness God's cosmic code.

War!

The war of a snake's fang and a tiger's claw!

The war of poison and rape and murder and disease!

German War!

It struck Berlin like a typhoon.

The night before there had been whisperings—yes! —also nervousness, fear, tense, shuddering expectancy.

Crowds paraded the streets, looking up anxiously at the flickering lights—cressets of evil—that shone behind the windows of the Imperial Schloss, the War Office, the Foreign Ministry, the Chancellor's Palace.

"War? Out of the question! *Ausgeschlossen! Ganz unmöglich!*"

Then, in the morning, the fact of it, crimson-stained, irrevocable!

In ten minutes the news had swept over Berlin; dipping eastward from the Emperor's Schloss to the wholesale district that clutters around the Alexander Platz and speeding up innumerable hands busy with needle and thread and gray-green uniform cloth; swinging beyond the drab, dusty flats of Treptow and causing burly foremen in overalls to curse the beery

slowness of their workmen, who were riveting bolts into gun caissons or trimming airplane wings into aluminum frames.

North it surged, to Moabit, with the message to countless factories:

"Get ready! Get ready! The minutes spell victory! They spell the Fate of the Nation!"

And trip-hammers thudded; bit-braces zummed; derrick-cranes hoisted away; dynamos throbbed; pilinggins shook and drummed; gudgeons slid into shafts; gas engines hissed and stuttered; pliers bit and wrenched and cut.

West traveled the news, echoing in the villas of merchants and bankers and brokers, sending them frantically to the long-distance telephones, there to rush orders to their correspondents on the stock exchanges of Frankfort and Munich and Vienna:

"Buy German Consols!"

"Buy Prussian State Railways!"

"Sell French Government Bonds!"

"Sell Russian Petroleum!"

"Sell Belgian Industrials!"

Remembering the secret orders received weeks ago from the Ministry of Commerce for just such an emergency; then cabling across to New York and Chicago with similar orders, supplemented later in the day by other, stranger ones:

"Buy Bethlehem Steel!"

"Buy Remington Arms!"

"Buy U. S. Steel Commons!"

Still on rushed the news, to Spandau, Magdeburg, Köpenick, Frankfort-on-the-Oder and many more of that spider web of small towns that cluster about Berlin, causing the division freight superintendents and the division passenger superintendents of the Imperial

German Railways to meet in sudden conclaves, not to figure and debate (all that had been done weeks, months, years ago) but to revise certain figures, to dovetail them with the new orders that shot from the Berlin Railway Ministry with the speed and precision of bullets:

"Freight train Number Two Spandau-Mannheim—switch to track 59, 9, O. P.!"

"Ninety-three car loads of coal southeast from Munich—no!—northeast—to Breslau! Track to Bohemian frontier!"

"Vienna clamors for coal, for cars, for tenders! For men!" And the comment, though not sent along the wires: "Damn these Austrians! Slow, soft! Just that much dead weight!"

Thus the news, rushing on, on. The Jaganath of War was in motion. Crunchingly, pitilessly, its wheels moved.

By noon, Berlin had re-made the map of Europe over beer and coffee and champagne. The British ultimatum had not yet been ticked on its way, thus talk ran free and brave.

Degenerate France, impotent Belgium, barbarous, top-heavy Russia were disposed of with the gesture of a hand, the twisting of an arrogant, or jesuitical word.

"*Wir sind die Herren Nation*—we are the nation of masters! Resistance? Shucks! Ours the strong hand, theirs the scraggly throat . . . And we squeeze, squeeze!"

During those first hours the war had not yet assumed a personal aspect, had not yet bitten with its ragged, slimy fangs into the life, the home, the comfort, the happiness of the individual German. It was

simply a glorious, shining adventure, a cumulated, latter-day memory of all the great men who had clouted German history to the final apex: Herman the Cheruscan, Friedrich Barbarossa, Prince Blücher, Moltke, Bismarck!

A stern duty, this war. A thundering, eternal right. But one that would be seen to by the army already mobilized—they were swinging down the streets like an immense gray-green snake with innumerable, bobbing heads—a million and a half men. Only the peace strength of conscripts, with perhaps an additional thirty or forty reserve divisions—just to stay in the background in case of emergencies.

Second line reserve? Third line? The men of the *Landwehr* in the prime of their years? The logy, bearded, retired burgesses of the *Landsturm?*

Nonsense!

This was a little saber rattling escapade for the beardless youth of Germany. For, of course, the whole thing would be a military promenade, breakfast in Brussels, lunch in Paris, back in Berlin for a late dinner and theater. The fighting would be over in a few weeks, meanwhile life at home would run in the same smooth channels.

"Yes. A military promenade, *meine Herren Commilitonen,*" said the red-faced chairman of the Borussia fraternity of students who had met as usual over their morning *Schoppen* at the Pschorr Restaurant. "We will take Paris and Calais. France will cede us the rest of Lorraine. Belgium will submit peacefully. Russia? Pooh! Afterwards we will speak a few words to those damned English and Americans. Gentlemen! I drink to His All-Gracious Majesty, the War Lord!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" came the alcoholic

chorus and steins were drained, then brought down on the wooden table with a crash.

The students smiled at each other. They had settled that little war.

"An experiment in racial biology," Professor Sachs said to his class at the university, "and the old German sword will prove that the experiment is right. It will wipe out forever that cursed and unnatural, that most ungodly heresy called Democracy, that ominous, new superstition of the Western peoples, those diseased, cowardly degenerates. War! A fact! A moral fact! A German fact! In its final consequences, a great, civilizing, beautiful fact! For the value or the non-value of an action can only be inferred from its consequences, and we shall dictate these consequences in Paris, as we did in Seventy, with a sword dipped in blood!"

"It will give a knockout blow to foreign competition," whispered chosen, well-primed speakers among the socialistic workmen. "It will raise our wage standard. It will help us to invade new markets. Beer will be cheaper, also wool. Meat will be more plentiful."

"The very thing," laughed the professional Antisemites. "For over a hundred years has Germany groaned under the heel of Jewish usurers—the Bleichröders and Warschauers and Mendelsohns and Oppenheims! This war will change all that. Under the cloak of national necessity we will dip our fingers into their swollen pockets. We will confiscate their millions—and that will help the East-Elbian *Junkers,* the flower of the land, the salt of the earth!"

"It's damned good business," opined the bankers and merchants. "Remember that last Brazilian Government order for locomotives? The Yankees got that. And that railway from Pekin to Shensi? The Chinese Government accepted a British tender. War will change all that. We shall insist on a clause in the final peace terms which will . . ."

"But neither England nor America are in this war," came the voice of doubt.

"Of course not. They're afraid of us, *diese verfluchten, hypokritischen Schweinehunde.* And just because they are afraid, we Germans shall dictate to them whatever we please . . ."

"Yes. Quite right. Just wait till our troops have entered Paris!"

Paris!

That was the slogan, the guerdon, the grail.

"Nach Paris—on to Paris!"

They clenched their hairy fists. They smacked their sagging lips. They exchanged lecherous, meaning winks.

Why, there were women in Paris. French women. They had read about them. They had seen pictures.

Too, there were art treasures, cellars filled with vintage wines, the best of food, everything worth while in life.

Loot!

Why, it was theirs! Paris was an oyster to be opened at the mere kick of their booted, spurred toes!

"Nach Paris!"

Crudely the boast was chalked on every troop train that snorted away from the Lehrter Railway Depot bound for the Northwest, for Belgium. For the road

lay there. It was easy. The Belgians would not be such fools as to resist.

The Belgian treaty? Rot! A scrap of paper!

The Belgians' honor? Rot again! They would pay for that selfsame honor with minted gold—gold which France would repay to the Imperial Treasury a thousandfold!

Thus:

"Nach Paris!"

The cry was echoed through the streets, flung to the skies, caught, flung high again like a glittering, tinselly ball.

People cheered. They shouted. They laughed. They drank toasts to the army, the nation, the Emperor, the Crown Prince, themselves.

Supermen, we! Beyond the Good and the Evil! We—the masters! We—with God! And so:

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" and again: *"Hurrah!"*

But around two in the afternoon a subtle change began to creep into the emotional atmosphere of the German capital. People still laughed and cheered and toasted. They still boasted and bragged insanely. They still drove their national megalomania with the knotted whip of lust and hatred.

But their triumphant joy seemed a little forced. The spontaneity had faded out of it.

Men, strangers, stopped each other on the street, faces just a little pale, eyes just a little haggard, hands just a little shaky. They produced blue bits of pasteboard—the summons to the *Bezirkskommando,* the inspection headquarters of the military districts where they resided.

"They're calling the second reserves to the colors. Another fifty divisions. I wonder why."

"Oh, just to make doubly sure. That's our German way. Anyway, we're past thirty-three, you and I, we won't have to fight. The war will be over in a month, before they'll have time to muster us in."

"I don't know about that. There are rumors . . ."

"Don't believe them. Foreign propaganda. English lies!"

"Still . . . Listen!" as a newspaper boy ran past, shouting his wares. "Here, boy! The *Berliner Zeitung!*"

"What is it?"

"What does that head-line say?"

"Wait. Don't crowd so."

"Yes—go on—read—"

"The Belgians . . ."

"Surrender? Submit?"

"No, no! *Gott im Himmel!* They resist! They fight!"

"Damned fools! We'll eat 'em up!"

"But England—Sir Edward Grey sent an ultimatum—yesterday . . ."

"Bluff! The English won't fight. India would rebel, Ireland, Canada, South Africa . . ."

Yet, for all their brave boastings, they were beginning to get nervous. The war was becoming a personal issue as, hour after hour, more reservists were called to the colors, by letter and telegram and telephone and newspaper advertisements and big placards pasted on the walls and those advertising columns, typical of Berlin, called *Litvas-säulen.*

In each city ward the office of the district military inspector was packed with an anxious mob shouting questions:

"When? When, *Herr Oberst?*"

"At once! Second and third reserves called out! Go to the barracks of your old regiments. You will find everything ready there, your uniforms, your rifles, your side arms. All numbered. *Alles klappt!* That is the Prussian way!"

Then the chorus, once more enthusiastic, terrible in its overwhelming, unreasoning, racial conceit:

"Yes. That is the Prussian way!" And the crowd, arm in arm, marching out on the sun-bathed streets, swinging along in the old, rectangular goose step they had learned years ago when they were with the colors, and singing at the top of their lungs:

"Lebt whol, Ihr Mädels und Ihr Frauen,
Und schafft Euch einen Andren an . . ."

And on they rolled to the barracks, each man to the cupboard which was painted with his number. They passed reservists, already in uniform, on their way, on foot, on horseback, and then every one would laugh and wave hands and handkerchiefs to those, the vanguard, who rode away triumphantly in the sunshine, women and children paralleling the marching columns on the sidewalks, crying, laughing, singing, shouting, throwing flowers and cigarettes.

The Uhlans of the Guard, too, were receiving their quota of reservists and Tom, who was on duty, watched them arrive, waited till they had donned their uniforms, then picked out horses and saddles for them. He, Captain von Quitzow, and young von Königsmark, promoted two days earlier to a second lieutenancy, were the only officers left at barracks. All the field officers, Colonel Heinrich Wedekind included, had been ordered to Metz an hour earlier to confer with the commanding General of the cavalry brigade of the First Army Corps; the squadron leaders had been

transferred to do some quick drilling with new mounted troops that were being levied for the Eastern border, and the subalterns were busy at depot headquarters. Tom realized that, for once, he was not being watched. They had forgotten about him in the general turmoil, but for the time-being he could not get away. There were too many things to do, and he helped loyally—not out of loyalty for that Germany which he hated, but for von Quitzow, who was fussed, nervous, wavering between tears and terrible fits of Berserker rage, and for von Königsmark, who was pale and serious, but unable to cope with the situation.

So Tom did his best, and it was four o'clock in the afternoon before the full quota of reservists had been mustered in and assigned to their squadrons.

"I'm going to snatch a bite," he said to von Quitzow, rushed out, and went to the nearest telephone booth.

He called up the Colonel's house. Of course he knew that Wedekind had left for Metz; and he chuckled when the servant told him across the wires that his wife had accompanied him.

"Bully!" he said to himself, jumped into a taxicab and, twenty minutes later, rang the bell of the Colonel's apartment. He asked for old Mrs. Wedekind and she came to him, pale, wrinkled, more feeble than he had ever seen her before, but with the same little malicious twinkle in her shrewd old eyes.

Through the open door she indicated her son's workroom that looked as if a cyclone had struck it, scraps of paper on the floor, books upset, drawers pulled out, disarranged in the haste of departure.

"When the cat is away . . ."

"The mice begin to play," Tom finished the proverb. "Yes."

He was silent. He looked at her thin, trembling hands, at her fringe of white hair beneath the spidery lace cap. For a moment he felt strangely, almost cruelly young. Then he looked into her eyes. He saw that the little malicious twinkle had given way to an expression of sympathy, of love even, and at once the difference in age between him and her seemed to vanish.

"Mrs. Wedekind," he said, "I have come here to ask you to . . ." he faltered, was silent. He did not know how to put his request into words; and she gave a short, bitter laugh.

"You have come here," she said, "because you are young and in love—and, therefore, selfish, terribly, terribly selfish!"

"Please—please . . ."

"No use denying it, my boy. And why should you? Love is glorious, love is selfish. It is the way of love. I—I know . . ."

Suddenly, as Tom looked, she seemed to grow very old. Her eyes became dim. Her words came mumbling:

"They—my son, the army, Prussia, the Emperor—they think that force dominates the world. But they are wrong. It is love which dominates, love which rules. And . . ."

Once more her words were clear and distinct:

"You want my help, don't you? To help you and Bertha to get out of Germany, out of the Eagle's clutches?"

"Yes," murmured Tom, "I want you to . . ."

"Do not tell me," she interrupted. "I could not listen to you. It would be treason. I am a German. But"—she put her wrinkled old hand on Tom's arm—"it may interest you to hear that I have decided to

join my son at Metz and that Bertha is going with me. You, too, are going there, with your regiment. Metz is but a few miles from the French frontier. Bertha and I leave to-night. To-morrow night, at eleven o'clock, I shall go with her to pray in the old *Marienkirche*—near the fortifications. It may be that I shall lose Bertha there. You see, I am old and short-sighted."

She rose.

"To-morrow night," she repeated, "near the Church of St. Mary, at eleven! Good-by, Mr. Graves!"

He bent over her thin, scented old hand. He stammered his thanks, but she cut them short.

"No, no, no!" she said, just a little petulantly. "I told you that you are in love, and that people who love are selfish, brutally selfish."

And then the Westerner in Tom rose to the occasion.

"That's where you are wrong, dead wrong!" he cried. "I—by Gosh!—I'll show you. I'll take you with me to France, to America, if I manage to make my get-away. I'll take both you and Bertha!"

She broke into a peal of laughter.

"Thank you. You are a dear boy, Tom . . . May I call you Tom? But . . ."

Abruptly her merriment ceased. She was terribly, stonily serious as she went on:

"I do not want to leave Germany."

"What?" asked Tom with naïve wonder.

"Don't you see? It is not only because I am too old, but also because—why, Tom, I *am* a German."

"But I've heard you say . . ."

"Many things—against Prussia and the Kaiser and the *Junkers*. True things. But, for all that, I love

the Fatherland—right or wrong!" She drew herself up. "And the Fatherland is at war." She threw open the window. "Listen!"

From the street, a great, zumming chorus rose, swelling, bloating, ever increasing, singing the old German battle hymn with a hundred thousand throats:

"Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein . . .
Fest steht, und treu, die Wacht, die Wacht am Rhein"—

Then, with dramatic suddenness, the song broke off. There was utter, terrible silence—hushed, strained, as of a thousand unspoken questions.

Somebody, an officer of the Cuirassiers, came running around the corner. He was waving a newspaper. Tom looked from the window, Mrs. Wedekind by his side. The crowd had turned like one man and was staring at the officer.

"What—what has happened?" Mrs. Wedekind's voice trembled.

And then the answer, from the street, as the Cuirassier shouted it at the silent, questioning mob:

"England! England has declared war!"—and, at once, a chorus of cries, of shouts, of hysterical yells:

"England! The traitor nation!"

"To hell with England!"

"Gott strafe England!"

And, clear above the roar, a single, high-pitched voice stabbing out:

"On to the British Embassy! Kill the English! Kill them!"

The shout was taken up. The crowd, the Cuirassier leading, rolled on like a maelstrom, and Tom grabbed cape and uhlanka and saber.

A moment earlier, he had felt prey to a certain doubt, a certain fear. Now he saw a chance.

"Good-by!" He kissed Mrs. Wedekind's hand. "To-morrow night at eleven, in Metz, near St. Mary's Church!"

And he was out of the room, down the stairs, into the street, running to catch up with the mob that was still shouting hysterically:

"Kill the English! Kill them! On to the British Embassy!"

CHAPTER XLI

THE MOB SPEAKS

WHAT had puzzled Tom, what he had wondered about and, finally, tentatively solved while looking from the window at the maddened German mob, was this:

Thousands of motor-cars of all sorts had been commandeered during the last few days and rushed to the frontier towns, including Metz—taxicabs, roadsters, heavy touring machines, massive trucks, racers, and armored cars. Given his uniform, his rank in the army, it would not be difficult, arrived at Metz, to do a little commandeering himself, to pick out a fast racer and then—*whizz!*—across the border. But the trouble was that, try as he might, his mind had never been able to grasp even the rudiments of machinery, the most ordinary mechanical details. He knew as much about automobiles as a baby in arms.

He was, in that respect at least, an atavistic throwback to an earlier, simpler age—a man on horseback.

Horses he knew, from withers to fetlock.

"Give me a horse," he used to say, "a clever, fast mare and an ugly bit of country, and I'll ride rings around your stinking, clanking motor-cars! Not on level ground, of course. But on hilly, treacherous ground, where the rider's brains count—and the horse's!"—and he had learned, at War School, that the sweep of land from Metz to the West was just that sort—broken, hilly, ugly.

Horses, then. One for Bertha, one for himself. And how could he get them?

All the fast horses, for days past, had been picked and entrained for the Northwest, the Belgian frontier, where three divisions of cavalry were supposed to make a flanking sweep through the rolling Belgian fields under General von Manteuffel. Too, the Russian border had absorbed thousands and thousands of picked animals as a mounted counterweight against the expected Cossack onrush. On the Metz-Verdun sector the War Lord was pinning his faith on incessant bombardment, followed up by countless waves of infantrymen. Of course, there was some cavalry there, too. But no picked, fast horses.

All that Tom had gathered during the last few days when the officers of the Uhlans had talked about it excitedly, had complained rather bitterly that their regiment, the best in the Guards, had been robbed of its finest mounts and was being sent to Metz, where there would be no chance for a dashing, clashing charge.

He would get to Metz all right. He would take the midnight train, the same by which he supposed Mrs. Wedekind and Bertha would travel. He would have to, since a later train would not get him there in time, and since he doubted that old Mrs. Wedekind would have more than one chance to bring Bertha to him. He imagined in fact that she would proceed to St. Mary's Church directly from the depot, before the Colonel knew that the two women had left Berlin.

There was yet another danger. That morning he had received orders to leave Berlin for Metz, together with Captain von Quitzow, on the next day. Furthermore, the latter was expecting him back at barracks to-night.

Well—he would have to run that risk. He would rush back to his room in barracks, evade the Captain and von Königsmark, tell his soldier servant, his *Bursche,* some cock-and-bull story, and make the midnight train all right.

But—he needed help once he reached Metz, help to get him the right sort of horseflesh.

Tom had been doing a good deal of thinking during the last months. The sudden coming of war had not altogether surprised him. He had listened to the mumbling, sinister voice of the undercurrent, he had thought over the many things that had happened to him since he had made his stake in the Hoodoos. He was now quite convinced that, what he had suspected, was true:

Vyvyan, inane, drawling Vyvyan, was a British Secret Service man. So were many of the other Englishmen whom he had met in Berlin, chiefly some of the little, wizened jockeys and trainers who foregathered at the "Gross Berlin American Bar."

These jockeys, through their original calling, were familiar with the horses of the German racing stables as a Boston dowager is with the passenger list of the *Mayflower.* Metz was a rich, prosperous town. Some wealthy man was sure to have a racing establishment there—and to that racing establishment, to the best two horses in it, he would have to win—and for that end he needed advice, help. For everything depended on the horses he and Bertha would ride.

But—whom should he ask?

It was the hysterical yell of the Berlin mob: "On to the British Embassy!" which gave him the cue, and he thought again of the strange words that Vyvyan had said to him many months earlier:

"If ever you should get into trouble, if by that time

I should have left Berlin, you must go to the British Embassy. Once inside you must find, somehow, the man who has the duplicate of my ring. Him you can trust. And nobody else."

Before this he had tried to get into the Embassy to find the mysterious stranger with the ring—that time when Bertha had told him that she was being held in Berlin against her will. He had failed then; and, since, he had been watched, shadowed.

But now he had a chance, with that crazed, yelling, blood-thirsty mob, rolling on relentlessly toward the same goal.

"On to the British Embassy!"

The shout was taken up like the response in some satanic litany.

Steadily the mob gathered strength, impetus, brutal, tearing sweep. From all sides men joined it, even women and children, shaking fists and sticks and umbrellas, picking up bricks and stones.

A mob! A raging mob with but one thought, one mania:

"Kill the English!"

The cry rose like some horrible incantation of lust and cruelty. Tom pushed into the thick of them, using fist and elbow and foot, until he had reached the front rank. He yelled and shouted and cursed with the best of them:

"The English!"

"Kill them!"

"Gott strafe England!"

"On to the Embassy! Tear it stone from stone! Give it to the flames!"

During that crazy rush down the streets of Berlin, Tom learned something about mob psychology. Too, about that accursed, insidious poison called Hatred.

He was not a German. He disliked everything German, had done so ever since the blindness of ignorance had been taken from his eyes and he had seen the real heart of the Teuton Beast. Yet, momentarily, he felt *with* this mob.

His mouth felt dry. His eyes bulged. Colossal, half-sensuous excitement quivered down his body, from head to toe, touching his spine with softly cruel hands, electrifying him. It was an incredible, trembling, unclean elation.

His fingers clenched. He shouted with the others, in a horrible, insane fervor of lust:

"Kill the English!"

But, after a second that seemed an eternity, he regained control of himself, and when finally the mob had reached the corner of the Wilhelm Strasse and rolled down toward the British Embassy, he was perfectly cool.

Heretofore, instead of stemming the human avalanche, instead of beating them back with their sabers and pistol butts that were usually so ready, the police, as if acting under orders, had only helped to swell the mob, had joined in the mad, killing chorus. Then they must have received counter-orders. Perhaps the shame of it had even pierced the thick skin of the German rulers. For, within a stone's throw of the Embassy platoons of blue-coats, on foot and mounted, hurled themselves against the oncoming horde.

"Back! Back!"

"Zurück!"

"Hey there—look out—" as the flat of a saber swished down on head or arm.

But they had acted too late. Already some of the crowd had broken through to the Embassy, had torn down the British escutcheon, trampling it, spitting on

it. Stones and bricks and sticks were hurled. Windows broke with a crash.

A woman cried hysterically.

Again the police advanced, this time using their sabers to good effect. The mob was hurled back, but not before a few of them had succeeded in battering down the doors to get inside the Embassy . . . to be immediately thrown out by athletic Englishmen, attachés and flunkeys battling loyally side by side.

All the invaders were flung out on the street except one—a man in a Uhlan uniform, who, sorely beset by a young Englishman on the left and another on the right, suddenly shouted in unmistakable American:

"Say! Cut it out! I'm not a punching-bag—nor am I a Dutchman!"

"I should say you aren't!" came the noways cordial rejoinder. "You're a disgrace to your country, to America"—a statement accompanied by another severe cuff—"and"—a blow—"what the devil do you mean by . . ."

"Cut it out!" Tom yelled again, defending himself as best he could. "I am looking for—for"—and, sidestepping a particularly vicious right to his jaw, he blurted out: "I am looking for the guy with the *B. E. D.* ring!"

There was silence—broken the next second by a drawling, familiar voice:

"Hello, hello, hello!"

Tom turned. There, in the doorway, stood Vyvyan, and the Westerner, relieved, amazed, gave a stammering, gasping exclamation:

"Well, I'll be . . ."

"Right-oh!" Vyvyan turned to the young attachés, who had again laid hold of Tom. "It's all right, dear chaps! This gentleman's a friend of mine. He's the

chap who sent McCaffrey to us with the warning about the steamship line—the changed names and rigging and all that sort of rot. Remember?"

"Yes."

"To be sure," wonderingly.

"Very well. Then don't biff him any more." He turned to Tom. "Come along up to my room."

Arrived there, to the Westerner's first question, Vyvyan replied that he had never left Germany. That time when he had been sent away as *persona non grata,* he had turned straight round on the Holland frontier and had come back to Berlin.

"I have been here ever since, doing my little bit."

"So you got my message about the transfer of those ships to American registry?"

"Right-oh. Thanks awfully. We spoiled that little German game. Tell you all about it some other time. And now—what can I do for you?"

The Westerner explained, and Vyvyan inclined his honey-colored head.

"Certainly I'll help you. I'll get you some sort of motor-car."

"No, no. You didn't get me, Vyvyan. I don't know a darned thing about machinery. Between you and me, I'm afraid of it. A horse—that's what I've got to have—two horses. One for Bertha, and one for me."

Vyvyan smiled.

"You won't have to drive," he said.

"Won't I though?"

"Of course not. I shall sit at the wheel."

"You?"

"Yes. I am coming with you."

"Why?"

And Vyvyan explained that the German Govern-

ment had put a train at the disposition of the British Ambassador to leave for Holland that same night.

"But our German friends have labeled everybody who is supposed to be with the Embassy staff. And, my word, I am *not* supposed to be here! If they catch me, they'll line me up against a neat white wall as sure's pop. Old Titmouse, the Ambassador, y'know, is trembling about that jolly little contingency even now. Of course the borders into neutral countries will be watched very close—for spies. But the French border, the battle front? There's the chance. And now you come, like my jolly old guardian angel, and solve the whole question. Yes. I'll go with you and Miss Bertha. We'll do the regular Prussian thing and commandeer the first speedy looking car we see in Metz."

"But—how are you going to get out of the Embassy?"

"Nothing to it. I have as many uniforms as the Emperor himself. Wait."

Vyvyan left, and returned five minutes later in the complete regimentals of a Uhlan of the Guard. He saluted.

"Herr Kamerad!" he snarled, and drew his arm through Tom's.

"But"—stammered the latter, pointing at the window—"the policemen there—the people. They will suspect!"

"Tom!" laughed the Englishman, "there are times when I think seriously of settling in America and earning an honest living by playing poker with the natives. Why, when it comes to bluff, I have you tied to the mast. Watch me!"—and, arm in arm with his friend, he left the Embassy and swaggered up to the Captain of Police in charge of the blue-coat cordon.

"My man," snarled the Englishman in his very best Prussian, "I just brought word to the Ambassador from His All-Gracious Majesty. See to it that nobody leaves the building without permit. Also"—he shook his finger—"see to it that no more mobs attack the Embassy. Understand?"

"Zu Befehl, Herr Hauptmann!"

The Police Captain saluted, while Vyvyan and Tom turned down the street. They parted at the Pariser Platz.

"Meet me at the depot to-night," said the Englishman. "I'll get the tickets."

Tom looked after him. He shook his head.

"You're right," he mumbled. "You ought to go to America. But you'll never get *me* to play poker with you! No, sir!"

CHAPTER XLII

TOWARDS THE FRONTIER

It was fairly late in the afternoon and a thunderstorm was booming from the north, trailing a cloak of sable clouds heavy with rain across the face of the town, whirling down the streets with a whipping wedge of hailstones that rattled against the window-panes like machine gun bullets. Lightning zigzagged in fantastic spikes of brilliant white and electric blue. Thunder sobbed dully, hopelessly, like the death gurgle of a shattered world.

Even so, ever-increasing crowds paraded the streets, spilling from houses and cafés and beer gardens out to the sidewalks and thence to the pavements.

Tom had taken a taxicab back to barracks, and his driver tooted his horn continuously. At sight of the beloved uniform, the shining uhlanka, the silver gray cape, the crowd would give way, often with cheers and hurrahs.

Many were drunk, the Westerner noticed. But, too, he noticed that many others, perfectly sober from an alcoholic view-point, people who, to judge from their sunken eyes, their drawn lips, had hardly partaken of food in the gigantic excitement that had swirled through the German capital like fog in the brain of a blind world, behaved even more extravagantly than the beer-soaked hooligans from the North-side slums. They sang and cursed and cheered and yelled.

First had been the fear that England might fight by the side of France and Russia, a fear promptly argued out of existence by stale statistics and staler national psychology. Then, like a thunder clap, had come the fact: England had sent an ultimatum, followed by a declaration of war. Already the vanguard of Britain's army was crossing the channel to come to the help of France's left flank, to protect Calais, to battle, later on, gloriously at the Marne. Already the navy, Britain's floating walls, was drawing a choking net across Germany's commercial throat.

Thus nervous reaction had come to the crowd like the release of an immense steel spring. In that mad moment Germany welcomed the entry of yet more enemies into the battle arena.

"Eine Welt in Waffen!" quoted a little underfed, pimply high school boy from a text-book. "A world in arms against us!"

And, at once, a university professor, in black broadcloth, steel spectacles, ragged mustache, dirty shirt and frayed cuffs, made an impromptu speech on the same subject. He started academically, but wound up with incoherent roars, just opening his huge mouth, showing his decayed teeth and yelling mad, pathetic invectives at France and England, the crowd shouting back its approval.

Another time, as his taxicab was caught in the human eddy that rolled across the Janowitzer Bridge, Tom was shocked by the sight of a middle-aged woman, well dressed in heliotrope taffeta, neat shoes, white kid gloves, and a little black Viennese toque. Had he seen her back home, in Spokane, he would have said that she was the wife of some prosperous mining man, of good family, soundly respectable, rather conservative, most likely a member of various

progressive civic organizations and clubs, and the mother of a large, happy family. In Berlin she was typical of the higher business or professional class, belonging to the soundest burgess society; and here she stood, at the curb, her neat little hat awry, her veil torn, waving a newspaper in her hand, and shouting a foaming, babbling stream of curses and obscenities against France and England and Russia and all the rest of the world.

Yet more scenes as Tom's cab progressed up the street:

A mad, nauseating hodge-podge of emotions, of shouts and yells and indecencies, a very miscarriage of patriotism, and always sprinkled and larded with God, Duty, Kaiser, Hearth, Home, Hurrah! And then more curses, more belching forth of savage blood-lust!

A cult of hatred! A cult of brutality! A cult of obscenities labeled Love of Country! And Tom thought it less terrible than pitiable. He found it in his big, simple heart to pity these people, top-heavy with worship of self and iron force, weak-kneed with meaningless, sugary sentimentality, rotten with false standards and bad beer.

Never in all his life had Tom loved his own land as during that drive. Faults? Of course America had faults. There was no nation this side of millennium free from them. A nation needs faults, like the shadows in a flame, to emphasize its brightness.

But the faults of America were those of youth, added to those of an ancient, badly digested, *Mayflower* Puritanism, faults at times sharpened and brought into clashing contrast by the continuous immigration and assimilation of tens of thousands of foreigners. Historical, geographical faults rather than national, or racial!

But—Germany? New Germany?

Why . . . There was that respectable middle-aged woman, there was the pimply schoolboy, the spectacled professor . . . And all mouthing mean obscenities, polluting the very God in whom they professed to believe.

Yes! America, too, had faults, but (Tom smiled as he coined the phrase) they were such damned decent faults!—while these . . . He shivered a little.

"Hurry up!" he said to the driver, as the crowd thinned, farther north where, in the drab, reeking tenements that clustered around the barracks, the martial enthusiasm decreased proportionately with the misery of the people who lived there.

Tom did not know how excited he was, and it was this very ignorance of his own emotions which helped him to dovetail minutely each tiny detail of his plans, to switch promptly when circumstances necessitated it, from the moment the machine stopped in front of the barracks.

A dozen or so men in dingy, peaked sweaters were standing at the curb, looking up at the great building.

"Our turn to-morrow," said one rather hopelessly, with a malevolent glance at Tom's uniform; and a woman of the streets, blowzy, enormous, vulgar, spat. A policeman ordered her brutally on her way.

Tom paid the driver, was about to dismiss him, then, rapidly reconsidering, asked him to come back in ten minutes and wait.

Inside the barracks the reservists, tired out with the strenuous drill of the last twelve hours, had thrown themselves down wherever they could to snatch a few hours of sleep before the morning when the long, gray troop trains would carry them to the frontier. Some were writing messages of farewell to friends and fam-

ilies, two or three were sitting in corners by themselves, staring at the floor with unseeing eyes.

One was choking down hysterical sobs. Tom patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't give in!" he whispered reassuringly, and passed on, down the long corridor that ran parallel to the gymnasium, leaving to his left the under-officers' mess, whence came broken bits of song and talk.

There was no light in Captain von Quitzow's room nor in that of von Königsmark, and Tom breathed more freely. It would be easier than he thought to make his get-away.

But, when he opened the door to his own room, he stopped on the threshold, thunderstruck. For there, evidently waiting for him, sat von Quitzow. For a moment the Westerner was frightened, nervous. He even thought in a flash of the chance of attacking the other, knocking him unconscious, if need be of killing him. But the German's first words reassured him:

"I am so glad you have come. So very glad!" The big *Junker* wiped his steaming red face with his handkerchief. "Von Königsmark asked me for leave. He wants to say good-by to his mother, and I let him go. Those reserve officers have all turned in—soft, civilian cattle—tired out after half a day's work—and," he added plaintively, "I'm all alone."

"What's wrong?" laughed Tom. "Seeing the ghosts of former wars?"

"No. Only . . ." Again he wiped his face. He looked at Tom, his soul, his whole self involved, confused, his sense of duty and discipline battling against the soft streak in his nature. "You see," he went on, "there's a little girl. We play duets together, she the piano, and I the violin. *Ach!* You should hear us play that Grieg concerto, so beautiful, so sweet! And

she lives quite a ways out in the Westend, and . . ."

Tom's mind worked quickly.

"I get you. Want to have a last shot at that Grieg whatever-you-call-it, and perhaps give her pouting lips a farewell smack, eh? And here you are, in charge of the barracks, orders and all that . . ."

"Yes, yes!" replied the other breathlessly.

"All right. Forget the orders. Forget Colonel Wedekind. He'll never find out. I'll look after things. Go on and hug your girl. No, no," as von Quitzow stammered objections and thanks all in the same breath, "it's perfectly O. K.! Run along and play. You needn't come back till the wee, sma' hours. I won't give you away."

A great, naïve smile overspread the *Junker's* round face.

"Thanks!" he bellowed, buckled on his saber, and ran out of the room.

"Item Number One!" Tom checked it off on his fingers. "And now, what next? To be sure! We'll try the same sugar pap on my servant."

He rang the bell and his *Bursche,* a squat, yellow-haired Mecklenburg lad, appeared, clicking his heels.

"Hans," said Tom, "I won't need you any more to-night. You have leave—all night leave. Go on and kiss your Gretchen!"

Came another bellow of Teutonic thanks:

"Vielen, vielen Dank, Herr Leutnant!"

"Same to you and many of 'em!" murmured the Westerner after the servant had left, checked off the second item as satisfactorily disposed of, and turned to the third.

He thought for several minutes, then he took a piece of paper, scribbled furiously, went out to the street and spoke to the taxicab driver, who had returned.

"Shoot along to the next telegraph station and send off this message, as fast as you can. Served your three years in the army?"

"Yes, *Herr Leutnant!*"

"All right. Then you know how to obey."

"Yes, *Herr Leutnant!*"

"Very well. Listen. Take this message, have it telegraphed as I said, but don't you dare look at the contents. *Militärgeheimniss* — military secret — you understand? Too, you tell the chap at the telegraph office he's to forget every word of the message as soon as he has ticked it off. Tell him to keep no record of it if he values his skin. It's in code, but there are dozens of spies about. My man," continued Tom, quoting shamelessly from one of Colonel Wedekind's favorite slogans, "I rely upon you, the army does, the Emperor!"

"Zu Befehl, Herr Leutnant!" came the enthusiastic reply, and the driver purred away while Tom called after him to return in half an hour.

He grinned mischievously.

"I, the army, the Emperor! Bully old high sign, that. Wait till I get back home to Spokane and put my brother Elks wise to it!"

In his room once more he went rapidly through his belongings, slipped whatever official papers he had, such as his commission, his transfer to war school, and his appointment as regimental remount officer, in his despatch bag, and changed into a serviceable field uniform of grayish green. He put on uhlanka and cape, girded himself with saber and a brace of heavy-caliber cavalry pistols; then, after a moment's deliberation, smiling softly to himself, he packed a leather case with his Mexican spurs, his range quirt, an additional long, sweeping full-dress uniform cape of silver gray lined

with crimson, and an extra pair of riding-boots and uhlanka.

Fifteen minutes later a messenger brought a telegram—the telegram which Tom had sent off with the help of the driver, not to forget Colonel Wedekind's Prussian shibboleth.

He tore it open and read.

It was addressed to Lieutenant Graves, Uhlans of the Guard, Berlin, was signed with the Colonel's name, and ordered the recipient to take the next train for Metz and report there.

Tom laughed.

"Fine and dandy!"

In the upper left-hand corner of the telegram was the date and the place whence it had been ticked—*Berlin.*

"That won't do!" decided the Westerner, and tore off the corner.

Then he went to von Quitzow's room, put the message on the latter's table, and scribbled a few words telling the *Junker* not to worry. He was sorry that he had to go. Orders! The other would understand. But everything was all right in barracks, and, if von Quitzow kept his mouth shut, nobody need ever know that for one night the Uhlan barracks had been left without an officer in charge.

By this time it was past ten, and the taxicab had returned. Tom picked up leather case and despatch bag and crossed the endless corridors of the huge, gray building. All the lights were out in the quarters of the reserve officers. The dormitories and the under-officers' mess were as still as a grave.

Tom blew a mocking kiss in the direction of the great Imperial Standard of Germany that draped its braggart folds above the door of the adjutant's office.

"I'se gwine to leave yo', honey,
Su' I is!" . . .

he hummed, remembering an old minstrel song, went down the stairs, entered the cab, and told the driver to go to the depot. He reached there at eleven, ate a comfortable meal at the station restaurant, and strolled out on the platform looking for his friend.

A moment later he found him, nonchalantly sprawled on a bench in the waiting-room, reading a late newspaper. The man seemed utterly fearless, utterly sure of himself, and Tom, too, realized that there was little danger. The German war machine was efficient, but, as nearly always in the case of too much efficiency, it was utterly unprepared to cope with an emergency not contained in the proper statistics and text-books. Later on, the fact of it was destined to be demonstrated on a large scale when forty years' unceasing, ultra-efficient preparation broke down, at the very gates of Paris, before—not cannons and rifles, for in that the Germans had an overwhelming advantage, but before the calm faith in the souls of the individual French, Belgian and British soldiers that the world must remain sound.

To-night, the same apparatus of efficiency broke down before the poker sense, in a way the sense of humor, of two Anglo-Saxons.

"Guten Abend, Herr Kamerad!" snarled the Englishman, and the American returned the salute and sat down by his side. Together, without speaking, they looked out on the platform.

It was crowded with officers of all ranks and all regiments, Prussians, Bavarians, Badensers, Saxons, and a sprinkling of Austrians and Hungarians. Some of them were in their cups and exchanging drunken boasts; others had endless conversations with women

of all classes—their wives and sisters and mothers, but also their mistresses, and even with women of the underworld, rank, vicious, unmistakable. The coming of war had finally shattered the fiber of their moral life, their moral perceptions, their moral prejudices. For once, being potential heroes, looked up to by all classes, even the grumbling Liberals and the discontented Radicals, as defenders of the Fatherland and conquerors of Belgium, Britain, France, and the world in general, they felt free to do exactly what and how they pleased.

And they did.

To-night the uniform was an excuse for license, where formerly it had been only one for arrogance and stiff, rectangular class consciousness.

A white-haired General was walking arm in arm with a notorious soubrette of the Metropol Theatre.

Two infantry lieutenants, beardless, rosy-cheeked, pitifully young, just gazetted, took turns in kissing a middle-aged, overdressed *cocotte* of the Tauentzien quarter.

And there were other similar scenes, the decent women, the mothers and sisters and wives, seeming not to see, or not to mind.

"Nasty, lascivious beast—this Prussian war machine," murmured Vyvyan. "Gad! I shiver when I think of the women of France and Belgium!"

"Wow there!" whispered Tom, gripping the other's arm, "steady! Steady, old hoss!"

But his own lips quivered as he saw Mrs. Wedekind and Bertha move slowly through the throng towards the waiting train.

"Let's go!" said Vyvyan. "I've bought the tickets and greased several official hands. I've a coupé reserved for us. That's one thing you can do in Ger-

many, war or peace: *Trinkgeld*—tips! Goes nearly as far as *'Zu Befehl!'*"

They entered a first-class compartment, marked *"Reservirt,"* and, a few minutes later, came the station master's shrill whistle of departure, and his cadenced call:

"All aboard for Magdeburg—Gotha—Meiningen—Frankfort—Darmstadt—Metz! Metz! All aboard for Metz and the frontier!"

A belch of acrid smoke. A clank and rattle. The officers and the few civilians rushed to their carriages. A chorus of farewells, last messages, last boasts:

"Back in two months, *Mütterchen!*"

"Don't you worry, sweetheart. I'll bring you something nice from France!"

"Tell Karl and Franz to work at their school lessons, or—*Donnerwetter noch 'mal*—when I get back . . ."

"Auf Wiedersehen, Schatz!"

"What d'you want, Minna? A Belgian General? All right. I'll send him by parcel post!"

"You mind your *P's* and *Q's* while I'm away, Emma, d'you hear?"

"Good-by! Good-by!"

And a final, bragging altogether shout of:

"Nach Paris! Nach Paris! Mit Gott für König und Vaterland!" while the train clanked out into the night, towards Metz, the frontier, France. . . .

CHAPTER XLIII

METZ

HARDLY was the train out of the Berlin depot when Tom Graves turned to his friend and asked the one question that had been puzzling him for so many weeks:

"Vyvyan," he said, "what is the secret of the Yankee Doodle Glory? The secret why I . . ."

"Why you were caught in the German Web and jolly near crushed? You and Bertha and Martin Wedekind and your old partner Truex and God knows how many others? Why both you and Truex received that cable from Johannes Hirschfeld & Cie, offering an exorbitant price for control of the mine? Why Baron von Götz-Wrede came to Spokane, making you a similar offer? Why, half jokingly, he made you promise to visit him in Berlin? Why Bertha was called there by a faked telegram to act as bait for your innocence? Why Truex was kidnapped and Eberhardt Lehneke found? Why, failing in this, they made you a German citizen by asking you to join the army? Why you had to sign the paper that gave control to the German Government? Why they chucked Gamble and put their own engineers in charge? Why they subsidized a steamship line to Hamburg from Tacoma? Why, when you seemed obstreperous and less innocent than at first they had imagined, they tried to murder you in a shameful duel? Why, after I had caused the Hongkong authorities to refuse clearance papers

to the first ship of the line, bound from Tacoma to Germany, they tried to transfer the line to American registry, first through Wedekind by holding his daughter as a hostage, then, Wedekind refusing to be bullied, through you?"

"Yes!" laughed Tom. "All these several and many Why's! Also—why did you get that sudden wireless appointment to Berlin when the wireless was bust? Why did they have you recalled as *persona non grata?* Why did you make me promise not to give up the mine? Why . . ."

"Oh! You *did* catch on to one or two things, what?" It was the Englishman's turn to laugh. "Well—the answer to all these Why's is the unknown metal in the Yankee Doodle Glory!"

"That stuff that scared Truex, affected the sense of hearing of the workers, puzzled Newson Garrett . . ."

"And did *not* puzzle the German chemist—wasn't Conrad Sturtzel his name?—in New York! Right-oh, old dear. You have it!"

"Except," said Tom, "what the fool metal is supposed to be good for. They ran, tried to run, that line of steamers to ship the ore, didn't they?"

"Go to the head of the class!"

"But . . ."

"The answer is—Great Britain, Sea Power!"

Lord Vyvyan went on to say that Germany, preparing for war, had always lulled itself into the blissful belief that Great Britain would repeat the blunder of Eighteen Hundred and Seventy, would sit tight on its money bags, and watch, nervously, selfishly, with protests, but without telling deeds, the dismemberment of France. France crushed, new iron and coal fields annexed, Germany would then have consolidated her

power, prepared another forty years, and swooped down upon England.

"But," cut in Tom, "the British navy? Your merchant marine? Your rich colonies ready to help you?"

"Exactly!" Vyvyan inclined his head. "That's just what puzzled the German war clique. They have a great army—an army that has fought. Too, they have a navy. But it is an untried affair, their navy, without traditions, without practical training. While our very life, our very blood, our very secret thoughts, are bound up with the sea, the navy, the merchant marine."

"Sure," grinned Tom, with a malicious little wink, "I know . . . *'Rule, Britannia, rule the waves . . .'* I heard tanked remittancemen sing it out West, on the Killicott . . ."

"They sang the truth," came Vyvyan's sober, unsmiling comment, "and Germany knew that it was the truth. Of course they have submarines. They'll use them mercilessly, I know, and they'll do a frightful lot of damage, they'll spill oceans of innocent blood. But they'll jolly well fail when it comes to the last chapter. For we *are* a race of sailors. And then that Sturtzel chap in New York or whatever is his filthy name, got that ore sample from Newson Garrett, and the German Secret Service got properly busy. For the unknown ingredient is . . ."

"What?" asked Tom, breathlessly.

"I'm no bally good at chemistry and all that sort of scientific drivel. But, as near as I can make it out, it's some stuff which, prepared, used a certain way, causes sound waves to multiply a hundredfold in as many fathoms of water as you jolly well please. A submarine fitted out with whatever devilish ingenuity the German engineers jolted together with that ingre-

dient of the Yankee Doodle Glory, could lay doggo on the bottom of the ocean, listen for hundreds of miles to the sound of the propellers of merchant and warships, wait for the psychological moment, pop up, shoot a torpedo, and pop down again. Such submarines would spell death to British sea power. All rather clumsily expressed. But, I s'pose you get it?"

"Sure." Tom scratched his red head. "All's as clear as pea soup. Only—where exactly do you sit in this game? How did you get wise to all this dope?"

"I'm in the British Secret Service"—he took out the little silver ring and pointed at the three letters: *B. E. D.* "British Ethnological Department," he gave the innocuous translation, and then, to Tom's further questions, he replied that the trouble with England, and incidentally with America, was that men like himself were held at a discount at home.

"It's different in Germany. A German Secret Service man has all the help he wants, all the money, every last bit of assistance the War or Foreign Ministries can possibly give him. With us"—he laughed bitterly—"we are lone wolves, we hunt alone, and when we are caught, God help us! Our Government won't! Those smug chaps back in London will shrug their shoulders, promptly deny our existence, and pass on to the next County cricket match. So, you see, old chap, I played a lone hand. Of course we have some money, contributed by patriotic individuals, but nothing to compare with what our German confrères can draw on. That's why, once I found out about the secret ingredient in the Yankee Doodle Glory, I didn't make you an offer for it, as the Baron did." He interrupted himself. "Wait. I'm doing myself an injustice. There was still another reason. A wretched racial short-coming . . ."

"You mean—that time when you whispered to yourself that you couldn't accept a block of stock in the Yankee Doodle Glory? That it wouldn't be playing the game?"

"Yes," replied the Englishman. "To keep the Yankee Doodle away from German hands, that's one thing. But to acquire it for England, under false pretenses, to even acquire a small interest in it? Why, man, don't you see? You and I are of the same stock, the same blood. But—there was that silly old josser of a King George the Third, and there were also Washington and Franklin. Well—our two nations are friends, at peace forever, I hope. But suppose something should happen, suppose the German element in your country, attaching to it other, dissatisfied, elements should attain power, perhaps the Presidency, get the majority in Congress. Suppose . . ."

"War between England and America?"

"Yes. A far-fetched possibility. Perhaps, God grant, an absolute impossibility. But—who can tell? This war, too, was unexpected. All the world will be drawn into it. America, too, who knows! Then, if I owned that mine, if I had piled up tons of the unknown ingredient, your land and mine at each other's throats, why—can't you see the temptation?"

"Yes," said Tom gravely.

"That's why I side-stepped it. I did not want the mine. I did not want to acquire it under rotten, false pretenses, and then use it against your land—after you might have sold it in good faith. I fancy I'm not a very efficient Secret Service man," he added whimsically.

Silently Tom Graves shook his hand. Silently they sat, facing each other, while the train hooted through the gray night, skirting the flat meadows of the Havel,

passing Potsdam that was a splotch of sad black punctured with malign, flickering, yellow lights, on to Magdeburg, the first stop.

Morning came with the latter town, and with morning, as the train rolled away southwest to the Weser, the rolling, pleasant fields, the neat white highways, the very oak forests that stabbed, wedge-shaped, into the distance, seemed alive with soldiers on foot and on horseback or bumping woodenly on rumbling gun carriages. On they swarmed to the west in endless lines of trucks and lorries, or on railway lines paralleling the main road with every form of carriage pressed into war service, from the newest affair turned out of the Stettin yards to historical bits of rusty iron rescued from the Breslau scrap heap, from the luxurious wagon-lits of the Southern Express to drab, rickety cattle cars that, up to twenty-four hours before the war, had carried thousand of tons of live Russian geese and Serbian pigs to feed Germany's crunching maw.

The Metz train, carrying a number of high-ranking officers, had the right of way, and the soldiers turned and cheered as they saw, painted on every car, the flashing initials that proved the train to be in the service of the General Staff.

At every station there were troops, crowds, flags, bands. There was hustle and bustle. Singing, laughter, shouting. Words of command. Curses.

Booted, spurred officers piled into the train, half-a-dozen of them into Tom's and Vyvyan's compartment. Two were staff officers, conscious of their importance, the other four young subalterns of a crack Saxon Hussar regiment, a little the worse for liquor and inclined to be boisterous.

There was an exchange of salutes, and inquiries about the latest news from the capital.

"Any more declarations of war?"

"Is it true that England has mobilized all the Central African gorillas and put them into kilts?" And ringing laughter, and more questions, rather more serious.

But they hardly listened to Vyvyan's replies, though the latter, in his role as "Berliner" officer, succeeded in being every bit as drawling and inane as he had been in his native language when the Westerner had first met him aboard the *Augsburg*. Their questions were really only meant rhetorically—boasting, arrogant questions that were supposed to answer themselves—all about German preparedness, German greatness, German invincibility, German triumph. All about the German *Herren Nation*—the Fate-chosen Race of Masters, of Supermen!

For that day, with the scent of blood in their nostrils, the ruling caste of Prussia was keyed to its highest, shrillest note.

Tom clenched his fist. Savage they seemed to him, but, too, childish and, somehow, whining, as if not quite sure of themselves in spite of their brave, clanking words.

There was a little infantry lieutenant sitting across from him—wizened, silly, a vacant, fatuous smile curling his thick, cherry-red, sensuous lips. He was speaking about himself, as a chosen specimen of the race of Supermen.

A wave of nauseating disgust swept over the American. Pleading a headache, he closed his eyes. At his left, the two General Staff officers were conversing in a sibilant, dramatic undertone.

"That Thionville plan is a bluff," said the one. "I tell you it's going to be . . ."

"Verdun? Has the Crown Prince . . ."

Tom closed his eyes yet more tightly. Presently he commenced snoring. An hour later, night already brushing low, the train pulled into Metz.

The depot was in a turmoil. Other trains were rattling in from all directions, from Stuttgart and Coburg and Dresden and Munich, all carrying officers and high civilian officials, the latter the vanguard of that army of governors and judges and tax collectors whom efficient Germany had already appointed to rule the lands to be conquered and stolen.

Vyvyan and Tom passed rapidly down the platform and out to the street. They saw Mrs. Wedekind and Bertha enter a cab.

"I shall try and see what I can do about commandeering a motor-car. Once I have it, I can't hang around town with it. No joy-riding in time of war. I must take it somewhere. Let me see—" he paused, thought, then asked: "You know Metz?"

"No."

"Listen, then." Vyvyan gave a string of rapid directions, winding up with: "You can't miss the Archbishop's palace. From there you turn straight west, out to the fortifications. You've got to bluff there."

"You bet." Tom smiled. "You know a whole lot about this town, don't you?"

"Rather. Did a bit of work here once. Beyond the outer ring of fortifications is an old fort. A sort of curiosity. They don't use it any more except for summer picnics. It's called the Hohenzollernwarte. Just the other side of it you'll find a thick clump of beech trees. I'll meet you there with whatever car I manage to commandeer."

"We got to hurry."

"Of course," said the Englishman, a little impatiently. "That's no news."

"Sure. But . . . Say, 'member when I fell asleep on the train?"

"Rather. You snored damnably."

"Well, it was a fake snore. I was listening. Yes, sir, I stole your thunder, my Secret Service friend! I was listening to those two staff officers."

Vyvyan looked up excited.

"What did they say?"

"They said that the proposed attack from Thionville against Verdun is only a feint, a bluff. The real attack is going to be launched direct from Metz. They say they're going to catch the French with their boots off!"

"They will not!"

"You said something there, young fellow. You just bet they will not—if you get the motor-car, and can drive as I can ride!"

And they shook hands and parted, the Englishman turning north, the American, despatch case and leather bag swinging from his left arm, saber truculently bumping against the ground, turning south, towards the Marienkirche—and Bertha.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE BLUFF

Tom Graves, walking down the ancient, curling streets of Metz, noticed a subtle difference between the atmosphere of war as it was here and as it had been in Berlin. There, straight through all the pomp and clank and vainglorious, childish boasting, had been a fantastic, extravagant, enigmatical streak. A streak of unreality. For Berlin, heart of the Empire, is, by the same token, at a safe distance from the frontier, while Metz focused sharply, shudderingly into the radius of actual hostilities. Thus voices were more hushed here; there was just the least little bit less bragging, and people went rapidly, directly on their way, giving odd, nervous starts when an airplane zummed overhead like a monstrous, steel-ribbed insect.

Tom found the ancient church of St. Mary fronting the street with a centuries-old cemetery, its narrow, baroque contours flanked by two uneven steeples, peaking up to the star-frosted night sky line like thin shafts of rigging.

Through the half-open doors came deep chanting, a sharp scent of incense, flickering fingers of light. Worshipers came and went, some returning from the altar, where they had burned candles to the Virgin for their sons about to go forth into battle, others arriving early to sob out their souls in the midnight Mass. There was a sprinkling of private soldiers and officers, Catholics from Bavaria in light-blue or bottle-green

regimentals, and a few Austrians, curiously ill at ease. Nobody paid any attention to Tom.

Arrived at the corner where the sacristy, newly built, jutted triangularly, he saw Mrs. Wedekind on her granddaughter's arm. She made a hopeless, flat gesture of finality with her mittened hand, then disappeared in a throng of peasant women in shorts skirts and clumsy, winged bonnets, Lorrainers all, talking in a mixture of French and German, some crying as if their hearts would break.

A moment later Tom was by Bertha's side.

"Walk slow," he whispered, tucking her arm in his; and she understood without asking him the reason.

For the streets were filled with soldiers, privates and non-coms and officers, strolling about with women and girls of all classes, all talking in tense, hectic undertones—like a last flaring of passion, a last calling out of a man's senses to a woman's, before the morrow, the battle, death.

Tom, clean to the marrow, sensitive, felt the silent surging of emotions. It embarrassed him. The more so as there was something he had to tell Bertha, something of which he had thought when, back in the Uhlan barracks, he had packed his leather case.

And he did not know how to put it into words.

She noticed his silence and finally she asked him what was the matter.

"Bertha," he whispered, "you know I love you better than all the world . . ."

"Tell me about your love after we're safely across the frontier," came her mischievous reply.

"You just bet I will. But . . . Say . . . Forgive me for what I'm going to tell you, and for the love o' Mike don't misunderstand me!"—and he told her in a hushed, halting whisper what was on his mind.

"Don't you see, honey?" he wound up. "It's the only way. Why—it's—the thing, the one thing they wouldn't suspect. It was so in Berlin, these last few days, and—look!" pointing at the amorous couples, some disappearing down dark alleys, others turning suddenly, after rapid whispers, into houses. "It's—safe!"

She gave a little choked laugh.

"Tom, dear," she said, apropos of nothing it seemed to him, "I know German—gentlemen. I talked to lots, and lots talked to me, and I am so very, very glad that you are . . ."

"What?"

"Just Tom! Just plain, clean, square, American Tom! Come," as he was going to branch into further explanations. "I know exactly. There's the place for us—over yonder!" indicating a small, drab, mean hotel not far from the Archbishop's palace.

Bravely she preceded him into the dirty lobby. Bravely she overlooked the frowzy desk clerk's leering words of greeting, not even turning her head when Tom asked for a room and was given the key.

"Is there a back entrance?" the Westerner asked the clerk. "You see . . ." he halted, stammering, and the clerk continued the sentence for him:

"I understand, *Herr Leutnant.* A jealous, elderly husband, *nicht wahr?*"

"Yes, yes. Where is the back entrance—exit, rather—in case . . ."

"To the left from your room, down the corridor, stairs leading into the side street. Thank you, *Herr Leutnant!*" as Tom planked down a ten-mark piece, adding another for tip. "Shall I show you the way?"

"Never mind," replied the American, walking up an uncarpeted, dusty flight of stairs to the room.

There he gave Bertha another string of whispered instructions—and his leather bag.

"I'll wait here," he said.

"But—my hair? I got some manicure scissors in my hand-bag. I'll cut it off!"

"Don't you dare. If you do I'll never propose to you again—except, perhaps, three times. You pile that mane of yours up as high as you can. The rest'll be O. K. They'll think you some little shrimp of an Ensign just gazetted."

"Tom!" she exclaimed indignantly, but he pushed her inside the room and waited in the corridor.

A few minutes later she came to him, looking for all the world what Tom had said she would, like a pitifully young Cadet just commissioned, because of the stress of war. She had put on the extra regimentals which Tom had taken along, and the silver-gray cape hid her from her neck to her feet, completely covering her dress. Her tiny shoes were drowning in Tom's riding-boots, the uhlanka was tilted at a rakish, perilous angle across her smooth forehead.

"Hullo, Puss in Boots!" laughed Tom; then, gravely: "Be careful. Don't swing your feet or those fool boots'll drop off. Here, take my arm!" leading her down the back stairs and into the side street which, luckily, was pitch black and deserted.

Luck continued with them. They met few people, and these mostly frightened, nervous Lorraine civilians, torn between fear of their German masters and the undying hope that soon again the gay soldiers of France would come marching and singing across the frontier. Due west they proceeded, as Vyvyan had told Tom, within sight of the fortifications, where they were stopped by an armed sentry.

Tom pulled out his regimental papers and waved them beneath the soldier's snub nose.

"Was fällt Ihnen denn ein?" he snarled in his best, most explosive German. "Here—look at the seal. Look at His All-Gracious Majesty's signature, you mutton head! Off with you! *Rechts um! Kehrt!"* And the sentry was so flustered that he forgot completely to ask for the password.

The whole scene was typical of the entire German system. Not only of the exaggerated discipline, accompanied by brutalities, which frightens what little original common sense they may be blessed with out of the heads of the privates, but also illustrative of another fact. For the Germans were so pleased with their own spies, many of them fearless, daring men, and with the results obtained that, through sheer, contemptuous, sneering cocksureness, they frequently overlooked the possibility that the Allied nations, too, might have clever Secret Service men in their employ.

Later, this was changed. Later, came the spy hunts from one end of Germany to the other, came acid skin tests on the frontier.

But this was the second day of war. The machine was still too cocksure, as said above, too stiff, too creaking, and Tom, side by side with Bertha, tripping in her enormous cavalry boots, stepped away from the sentry and out into the night.

They reached the Hohenzollernwarte a few minutes later. Vyvyan was there, peering into the dark, and in the yet darker shadow of a clump of beech trees Tom saw the dim outline of a rakish, low-slung racing car.

The Englishman laughed when he saw Bertha.

"My word," he said, "you're the best-looking little

Uhlan I've ever seen. You'll pass muster all right in front of any snooping outpost."

He helped Bertha into the tonneau and jumped into the driver's seat.

"Come on, Tom!" Then: "My God! What are you . . . What is . . . Quick! Quick!"

For, simultaneous with his first word to the Westerner, with the latter about to step into the car, with his own hand already busy with the starter, there had been a thunder of hooves, cries, the rattle of sabers; and, the moon just then breaking through the clouds with a broad, pitiless, diamond-white ray, he saw three figures on horseback charge down upon them.

Uhlans, they were. One was an officer waving a sword. The next second he recognized him: Colonel Heinrich Wedekind, his face distorted with rage and triumph. The other two were privates, their long lances leveled, the little flags on them fluttering in the wind.

One of the two privates was a few feet in the lead. His horse was the fastest. He spurred it on, the lance point flickering like the eye of some malevolent beast of prey.

It had all happened in less time than it takes to tell.

"Quick!" he cried again to Tom.

But it was too late. The Uhlan loomed up a few feet from the automobile. His lance came down, as if searching for blood with its steely point, and, at that exact moment, Tom sang out:

"Go on! Don't wait for me! Remember Bertha!"

Vyvyan obeyed instinctively. He shot the car forward with a great crash, a leaping bound.

Tom had thought, figured, measured, and acted at the same fraction of a second.

Just as the mounted man was closing in, as his lance was about to come down on the occupants of the car, the Westerner had ducked, swerved to the right, jumped from the ground like a cat, and caught the frenzied, galloping horse around the neck. He swung himself up. The double weight acted on the horse like a brake. The Uhlan cursed. But his long lance was useless in a body-to-body fight, and before he could reach into his boot for his carbine, Tom had drawn his revolver and shot him through the head.

The man fell sideways out of the saddle and to the ground, twirling grotesquely, and, in the twinkling of the moment, Tom tore the lance from the dying man's grasp, shifted it to his left hand, let the reins drop loose, relying on the pressure of his knees, and turned to meet the shock of the Colonel and the other private, revolver in his right.

He shot once, and missed. The others, trained cavalrymen, changed their tactics. They deployed to right and left, shooting as they galloped past the American, one bullet going clear through Tom's uhlanka—he felt it singeing his hair—the other missing him by an inch.

They brought their horses to a stop, turned, and again deployed right and left. But this time Tom was ready for them. He remembered his old training. His former craft came back to him: the craft of the round-up!

As they came on, this time drawing in a little closer to either side so as to make more sure of their aim, very suddenly he turned his horse, swerved in the saddle, and bent low. His left hand, armed with the lance, shot out. It caught the Colonel in the throat, killing him instantly, while the revolver in his right

spoke twice, each shot hitting the mark. The private fell out of the saddle, onto the ground. He lay there, curled up, like a sleeping dog.

It was then, with the three men dead at his hands, that a great, sad reaction came upon the American. It was War! Now, for the first time, he completely realized the grim tragedy of it. The killing of men! The spilling of blood!

His lips worked. He felt nausea rising in his throat.

But he controlled himself.

He turned his horse to the west. Over there lay Verdun, and he knew the road, had studied it in War College. There had been a special course.

Less familiar he was with the northern road that dipped into the direct Verdun approach twenty miles beyond: the Thionville road where the feint attack of the Germans was meant to give the Metz army corps a chance to catch the French defenders napping.

Well, he would have to trust Vyvyan to do that part. Vyvyan and Bertha—they had the motor-car, while he was a man on horseback . . .

A man on horseback—once more! Like out West, home, on the range! Riding through the night, with the stars and the moon to guide him!

And he rode!

He rode as he had never ridden before!

CHAPTER XLV

OVER THE BORDER

THE Jaganath of war was moving its wheels, sharply, pitilessly. On it rolled towards the frontier (there was now none except a line of blood where men had died) and crossing it near Gravelotte, pausing perhaps for the breathless fraction of a second to ponder on that other battle that, there, forty-four years earlier, had seen the flower of the French cavalry slaughtered by the overwhelming cannons of the Teuton invader.

Tom rode in the wake of the scouting parties, guided by the stars—"just like back home," he thought, "when I used to go after rimmed cattle."

The ground was uneven, broken by clumps of trees, then, beyond Gravelotte, rising in layer upon layer of ragged rock, again dipping into valleys and bottom farms that had been deserted by the peasants.

"Sorry, old girl," he said to the mare, as he spurred her down a sharp hillside, "don't mean to hurt your feelings, but you got to do it! Wow there!"—and, forcing the horse to squat on its hind quarters like a dog, he made it slide through the loose sand and gravel in a sitting posture, pulling the mare sharply to her feet and jerking her to a gallop, without waiting for breath, as soon as level ground was reached again.

He grinned to himself. "Well," he said in the general direction of the evening star, "I've seen a lot of

those motion picture weekly reviews. But, believe me, that Dago cavalry has nothing on me!"

On he galloped, finding water for himself and his mount at many little streams. Every half hour or so he stopped for a short rest. For—to quote his range philosophy—he didn't believe in waiting till the horse was worn. He said that horses were cussed animals at best, and the only way to ride them was to give them a few minutes' rest before they had a chance to know that they were tired.

Once a narrow wedge of light shot from behind a heap of stones, and his mare plunged violently, switching her flat, docked tail, and looking nervously sideways to escape the glare of the light.

The cause of it, even as Tom was drawing a bead to shoot at the flash, was revealed a second later when a Bavarian infantryman, electric pocket lamp in his hand, stepped out and saluted. He had recognized the Uhlan uniform, and it did not even need Tom's snarling "Despatch rider!" to cause him to lower his rifle to the carry and step back again into the shade of the stones, switching off his lamp.

Occasionally, riding as hard as horse and leather would let him, he met long, ghostly lines of foot soldiers plodding stolidly through the star-flecked night, field kitchens on wheels, and motor caravans of the Imperial Service Corps.

But he was hardly noticed: just an officer of Uhlans, dashing into the night, like so many hundreds of others.

There were no trenches, no miles upon miles of barbed wires in those early war days to stop his progress, and he rode, rode!

Down a hill, sliding! Up a hill, bent over the mare's neck, pulling her up almost bodily, forcing her

to climb like a cat! Taking a fallen tree at a long, lean jump! Swerving to escape the shock of a battery that came suddenly looking out of the dark! Slipping down the gravel bank of a broad stream, spurring the animal to breast the swirling water, till his hands were raw with the pulling of the reins, his knees numbed with the gripping of the saddle.

Suddenly he laughed.

A saddle! A silly, light, postage stamp saddle!

And he dismounted, he loosened the girth, he chucked the saddle into a clump of bushes.

He patted the horse's glistening, sweat-studded neck.

"Now we'll do some real riding!" he said, and he vaulted up, his legs dangling like an Indian's, his flesh thrilling to the touch of the horse's flesh.

And he rode! On!

Faint from the distance, the direction of Verdun, boomed a steady, dramatic roar, the big guns slashing into the war game. A splotch of whirling white shell stabbed the opaque black of the heavens. And on he rode, at a short gallop, as, the hills coiling higher, the ground became broken with splintering, treacherous stones. He could not see them. He felt them. Sensed them. He was bred to the free range, the open.

As he drew nearer the supposed lines of the French, the thought came to him that the French outposts might not like his uniform, that they might shoot on sight.

"Holy Moses!" he soliloquized. "Cheerful little prospect. But," he laughed grimly, "better to die by a French bullet than be strangled to death by the German Web! Git up there, old girl," as the mare shied at a puddle glistening in the moonlight.

Another short rest. And again he sent the horse

to a long, stretching gallop, on and on and on!

The lines of an old poem came back to him. He had been made by his father to learn it by heart. Had hated it, as boys will. Yet had never forgotten it.

Now here, in a foreign land, riding through the night, away from the Germans, on to the French, the truth of the poet's words struck him with an almost physical blow:

> "Up from the South at break of day,
> Bringing to Winchester fresh dismay,
> The affrighted air with a shudder bore,
> Like a herald in haste, to the chieftain's door,
> The terrible grumble and rumble and roar
> Telling the battle was on once more,
> And Sheridan twenty miles away."

"Twenty miles away," murmured Tom. "But, by Ginger, we'll make it. Git up there!"

As he rode on he met with no more German outposts or marching columns, since the skeleton divisions that were making the feint attack from Thionville had deployed to the north while the Metz divisions that were expected to smite the French lines in front of Verdun with a sudden, massed, unexpected blow, were still far in the rear.

Yet, occasionally, there was the sharp, thin flash and staccato report of a rifle, hurriedly fired and immediately echoed by other flashes and reports, showing that scouting parties of the opposing armies must have come into contact with each other.

Once the terrible hysteria of overstrained nerves, of overtaxed waiting and expectancy must have struck one of the Metz brigades, for quite suddenly, from the east one of their field batteries belched into action, shooting at nothing in particular. A great gun gave

answer in the distance. There was a melancholy wailing of falling shells. Tom's horse plunged, swerved, nearly fell, but his hands reached out, soothing, strong.

"Nothing to be afraid of," he said. "It's all right, old girl. Now, then—look out for that tree," as, the moon hidden by an inky cloud bank, a huge, gnarled oak sprang from the darkness, then was swallowed again in the darkness as, obeying Tom's hand, the mare sidewheeled.

"Bully for you," commended Tom. "A little less nervousness, and I'd turn you into a range pony."

And he rode on, getting the utmost speed from his horse, for another thought had come to him. Suppose something happened to Vyvyan and the girl? Even so, there still was France, and, though he was unfamiliar with the Thionville approach, he might get direct to the Verdun lines and give warning—in case Vyvyan failed.

Suddenly, thqugh he rode for his life, all personal considerations of safety whirled away and disappeared like rubbish in the meeting of winds.

Only one thing mattered:

The French! Verdun!

There was something maniacal, something grimly fanatic about the thought, the steely resolution, and, in that hour, as he rode through the night, the soul of the simple, straight, square Westerner rose to the height of greatness.

On!

The horse panted, breathed heavily, staccato. But something of the man's unconquerable spirit seemed to flow into the animal consciousness. It was tired. Tired to dropping. Its muscles pained. Its lungs, tortured, extended, then suddenly contracted, quivered as the motion of the legs pumped the air through.

But the mare stretched her magnificent, long body. She was a thoroughbred—like the man who rode her.

Again a burst of sound, to the north this time, thundering to a portentous, smashing, roaring climax, and just for a moment Tom felt something clutch at his heart with clay-cold fingers.

Fear? Yes!

He owned up to it like the brave man he was, and, just because he owned up to it, an immediate reaction came to him as the shots plopped far out into the night, finding their target far away; and he said to himself that there was no danger.

Yet, a few minutes later, the whistle, the shrieking, the crack and clank, enveloped him with an intolerable sense of loneliness, of insecurity, of stark powerlessness. For a second, that was like an eternity, nothing seemed to matter except the plomp of the shells.

It seemed the end of the world! A world dying in a sea of hatred and lust and blood!

But, whatever the fantastic thoughts in his subconscious self, his conscious self was cool, collected. It communicated the warning of treacherous ground, of slippery timber fall, of turbulent little wayside stream, of crumbling rock slides, to his brain, the nerve center, and the nerve center sent the messages on to eye and hand and leg . . . And he rode, like a Centaur—on, on, away from the Web!

Then silence, but for the thud of the horse's feet—silence again torn by the rumble of distant guns.

Another mile, and the sun rose slowly, with haggard, indifferent, chilly rays, immediately shrouded by a thick slab of mist.

Here and there a tree stood out, spectral, lanky, like a sentinel of ill omen. The rumble and grumble of

the guns drew steadily nearer. Too, the short, throaty, vicious bark of mortars with a wailing, high-pitched screech at the end, and the deep, fully rounded note of howitzers. Above the mist sobbed the engine of an airplane, doubtless painted with the black and white cross of Prussia. It was absolutely invisible. Yet, somehow, Tom could visualize it—like some evil spirit, infinitely brutal, infinitely subtle.

The mare gave a little, pitiful whinny. It was as if she meant to say to the rider:

"I can't. I can't. You have ridden the heart out of me, and the strength, the life!"

Her knees gave way, but Tom pulled her up with his soft, strong hands. The animal's labored, sibilant breathing sounded terribly distinct, terribly portentous.

"Steady!" he murmured, "steady, you beauty," as, nearly throwing him, the mare danced sideways, frightened at an enormous sheet of dazzling, whitish blue light that jumped up to the zenith, then dropped to the tortured earth with a million yellow, racing flames.

From a low, hog-back hill rose a curled plume of thick, inky smoke with a heart of sulphurous gold. The next second, an artillery salvo belched up, stopped abruptly, was followed by an immense burst of sound waves like a giant beating a huge drum. The western sky swallowed the mist in an intolerable, peacock blue, nicked with vivid purple.

Tom shaded his eyes with his hands. With his sharp eyes, far away, he could see a flag—very small it seemed, very foolish. But . . .

Yes! He could not make out the colors. But the stripes ran vertically, not horizontally. It was the flag of France!

"Yip—yip—yip!" his voice peaked to a quivering, long-drawn Indian yell.

Then, to his horse:

"Come on! Come on, you beauty! We're there! We've made it!"

The mare plunged forward. In front of him, across the rim of a cup-shaped valley, Tom saw a number of small figures.

The French! Doubtless an outpost, or a scouting party. They came up on level ground. They stood erect, bent forward purposefully. One, most likely the leader, waved his arms.

Again Tom yelled. A great joy surged in his heart —and then, quite suddenly, it seemed as if a giant hand was plucking him from the saddle and hurling him through the air. Then it seemed to him as if he sank into a cushion of air.

For a fleeting moment, though he could not utter a sound, he saw quite clearly. He saw his horse, a few feet away, rolling on its back, waving its legs as in a pitiful appeal for mercy . . .

The whole world seemed to totter crazily. The morning sun, blazing through the mist, heaved like the bow of a ship, then swung to and fro in a mad, golden pendulum.

He felt a dull jar.

Consciousness faded out.

When Tom came to, he found himself in a large tent. There was something moist and cool on his forehead. For a moment he lay still. Then he opened his eyes, and he saw that he was stretched out on a hospital cot and that, sitting by his side, was Bertha.

She leaned over without a word and kissed his lips.

"What—happened . . .?"

"I'll tell you," came the voice of Vyvyan. He was standing near the other side of the cot. "You fell in with a French outpost. So did Miss Wedekind and I. But we had enough sense to tie our handkerchiefs —fortunately I had three—together and wave it like a white flag. You forgot that jolly little particular. They saw you coming on, the French outpost, just as if you were the whole bloomin' Teuton army lusting for blood and boodle. They saw your Prussian uniform, very naturally thought you one of the *Gott Mit Uns,* and one of them fired . . . No!" as Tom began gingerly feeling his arms and legs. "He didn't hit you. Hit your mare, though, square in the chest, and you did a remarkable and not altogether graceful somersault. Fell on your jolly old head."

"I guess so. It throbs terribly."

Then, suddenly remembering, he went on in a tense, anxious voice:

"About the German plans — the attack from Metz . . ."

"Everything's as right as rain, old chap. Bertha and I got here in plenty of time. I had a talk with the French commander after I convinced him that we were not particularly bold Prussian spies—by the way, you and I are both due for the War Cross—and the General did a lot of rapid figuring and switching and ordering. My word, the Prussians will get the merry dooce when they get within reach of the guns. All right," as Tom was about to speak again, "I am off. I s'pose there are a few things you'll have to talk over with your—oh—nurse;" and he left.

There came a long silence, broken by Bertha's:

"We're safe, Tom. Thanks to you. As soon as we're home, you and I . . ."

She blushed, and as he did not speak, she went on with a little laugh: "Why, Tom, aren't you going to propose to me?"

He sat up and took her in his arms.

"Sure I will. But—"

"There's no but. Not this time, Tom!"

"There may be."

"Why?"

"Well, sweetheart, formerly, when I proposed to you I used to say: 'I love you. Let's get married.'"

"That'll be plenty this time, too."

"Oh, no, it won't, for this time I am going to say: Dearest, I first saw you, I first loved you, back home in America, out on the Killicott, when I was a plain American horse wrangler and rode the range. I—well—got sort of engaged to you when I was a German for the time-being, dressed in the blue and crimson of the Uhlans of the Guard. And now, honey, will you marry—a soldier of France? That's, if they'll have me?"

And her reply was sturdily, uncompromisingly Western American:

"You just bet I'll marry you, Tom. You just bet I'll be the wife of a soldier of France. And you just bet those Frenchmen will be tickled to death to get you. If they aren't—*I* shall talk to them!"

Then she kissed him.

THE END

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